

FADE IN

LEGEND READS: "It is a fundamental law of defense that you always have to use the most powerful weapon you can produce."
MAJOR GENERAL JAMES BURNS

FADE OUT

LEGEND READS: "Courage consists not in blindly overlooking danger, but in seeing it, and conquering it." DAVIS

FADE OUT

LEGEND READS: "In memory of Dmitri Tertyshny (1976 - 1998)"

FADE OUT

INT. ESSEX ARENA - DAY

Framed photos of famous Storms players from winning seasons are seen huddled around the Wellington Cup.

Championship banners in the rafters of the Arena are seen:
1972-73, 1973-74, 1974-75, 1975-76, 1976-77, 1977-78.

More framed photos are seen showing goalies, captains, right and left wingers, defensemen, and coaches.

SPORTSCASTER (V.O.)
(with excitement as crowd
cheers in background)
The New York Storms have continued
to establish themselves as a hockey
dynasty by winning their sixth
consecutive Wellington Cup!

A photo of the head coach, Dominik Foley, is seen last as the scene dissolves to:

INT. ESSEX ARENA - NIGHT

LEGEND READS: "April 2, 2006"

Footage of the Storms being mathematically eliminated from the CHL playoffs once again is played.

SPORTSCASTER (V.O.)
(with disappointment as
crowd barely cheers in
background)
(MORE)

SPORTSCASTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And that's it for the Storms, as they are once again defeated and eliminated from playoff contention. The frustration in the front office of this hapless New York team must be wondering what it is that they can do to stop this continuous string of heartbreaking seasons.

The SPORTSCASTER's voice fades away into the crowd.

INT. PATTON HOME (LIVING ROOM) - DAY

LEGEND READS: "Off-Season, August 2006 - Coventry, Rhode Island"

DALE PATTON is entertaining male FRIENDS in his home. The television is muted in the background, but shows sports highlight images.

FRIEND

So, there's Buddy, right? And he's got this sixteen-point buck in his sights! And all of a sudden, Freddie yells out, "Hey, look, there's a bunny!"

Patton and his friends begin laughing riotously.

FRIEND (CONT'D)

And the friggan' deer runs off into the woods!

Patton and his friends now roar louder.

FRIEND (CONT'D)

So, here comes Buddy home that night with a tiny little rabbit! He said it was the lousiest tasting rabbit he ever had!

All the men are now doubled over in merriment as the bottles of beer in their hands spill on the carpet. The telephone RINGS and Patton moves to answer it.

PATTON

Yeah.

As the guests continue to laugh amongst themselves, Patton listens intently. Then he covers an ear to better hear the conversation on the other end. His face suddenly goes blank. He answers (inaudible dialogue) and then gently hangs up the phone.

Some of his friends notice that he is now staring off into the distance blankly.

FRIEND
What's up, Dale?

PATTON
The New York Storms have just asked me to be their head coach for the upcoming season.

INT. PRACTICE RINK (ICE) - DAY

A whistle BLOWS as STORMS PLAYERS begin skating laps around the ice. Assistant head coach, KARL DEHR, and General Manager, BRIAN FALLOR, are standing on the ice and watching the players.

FALLOR
So, this Patton is going to be coming in tomorrow and meeting with Craig. Supposedly, he's some kind of little league miracle worker.

DEHR
(removing whistle from his mouth)
And this is the guy that Craig picked himself?

FALLOR
Yup.

Dehr watches as a large player skates by them.

DEHR
Well, I can't wait 'til these guys get the news.

INT. PRACTICE RINK (LOCKER ROOM) - DAY

Disgusted players are swearing and sweating as Dehr and Fallor stand before them.

DEHR
Now, c'mon, fellas...calm down. This Patton is fresh to the league and may give us some new insights on our playing ability.

WEBSTER

I never even heard of this guy.
What teams did he play for?

Dehr looks nervously to Fallor who suddenly clears his throat and steps up to address the CAPTAIN's question.

FALLOR

He, uh...he played for the
Lafayette Beavers.

The players begin to snicker and scoff.

WEBSTER

What the fuck is that? A pre-
school team?

FALLOR

No, it's an RIHA team.

BLAKE

R-I-H-what?

FALLOR

RIHA. It stands for "Rhode Island
Hockey Association."

The players start moaning and laughing again.

FALLOR (CONT'D)

Now, look, it's not yet written in
stone, but the chances are good
that this guy is gonna be your next
head coach. So deal with it!

The players continue to grumble.

FALLOR (CONT'D)

Let's just stay positive, okay?
Hell, we can't climb any lower into
the basement than we already have.

The players become quiet.

INT. PATTON HOME (DEN) - NIGHT

Patton is looking at a photo of himself when he coached the Lafayette Beavers. VIRGINIA PATTON, his wife, enters the den and approaches him, putting her hand on his shoulder.

PATTON

These Storms are pathetic. But I
guess it really doesn't matter.

(MORE)

PATTON (CONT'D)

Their fan attendance is so horrendous, no one would even notice if I screwed up anyway.

VIRGINIA

So, does this mean that you're taking the job?

Patton regards the photo.

PATTON

We're going to have to get a place on the Island.

INT. BEAUMONT'S OFFICE - DAY

CRAIG BEAUMONT, the owner of the New York Storms, is sitting at his desk and facing Patton. The potential coach looks ill-at-ease in his seat.

BEAUMONT

Dale...this is a club that's just crying out for leadership. You probably know about our declining attendance. And I'm sure you've read or heard about the players' bad attitudes.

PATTON

Mr. Beaumont...you are aware that I've never played professionally, right? I haven't even -

BEAUMONT

I'm not interested in you because of some record with the CHL, Dale. I get it that you haven't played. You don't even have PHL experience.

PATTON

Then, why me?

BEAUMONT

Look, I know you weren't a superstar in the Rhode Island league.

PATTON

I was a sub-standard winger, at best.

BEAUMONT

Nevertheless, I've been privy to your coaching record with the Beavers. You took a nowhere, nobody team and, in only one season, turned that club around into a team of champions.

PATTON

Yeah, but they were a bunch of -

BEAUMONT

I saw the rosters, Dale. You brought in no new team members and kept that club on top for six consecutive seasons.

Patton has no answer.

BEAUMONT (CONT'D)

Then, you retired. And, lo and behold, the team drops like a stone to the bottom of their division. Coincidence?

PATTON

I can't guarantee that I'll keep the same players or even the coaching staff.

BEAUMONT

You do for this club what you did for Lafayette and you can trade the whole damned lot of them. I just want another run at the Cup.

Patton nods.

PATTON

I'd like to have a look at these guys, up close and personal.

INT. PRACTICE RINK (ICE) - DAY

Patton, Dehr and Fallor are standing on the ice, watching the players skate around the rink. As the players skate by, they give Patton disapproving looks. Patton notices that the captain of the team, Bruce Webster, is not there.

PATTON

Where's Webster?

DEHR
 Uh, he didn't make the optional
 skate today.

Patton balks and then points to Dehr's clipboard.

PATTON
 Write this down and then post it.
 Until further notice, all practice
 skates are MANDATORY. No more of
 this "optional" bullshit.

Fallor smiles approvingly as he watches Patton.

DEHR
 Should I write, "bullshit?"

INT. PRACTICE RINK (STANDS) - DAY

Patton, Dehr and Fallor are sitting in the stands, watching the practice skate from a different perspective. The head coach is reviewing a roster attached to his clipboard.

PATTON
 Number forty-two?

DEHR
 A rookie, Mikael Gustafson. Took
 him from the Swedish League.

GUSTAFSON is seen taking a soft slapshot at the goalie.

DEHR (CONT'D)
 He's got a lot of potential. A
 shitload of speed. In fact, he's
 the quickest on the team. We just
 need to get him with the right
 line.

PATTON
 What about number thirty?

DEHR
 Another rookie, Christian Blake.
 He's a defenseman who specializes
 in the rush. But he can skate big
 to back up the counterattack.

BLAKE is seen as he skates backward, attempting to poke-check the puck from the attacking player's stick.

PATTON
Has anyone tested out this new
goalie, Quick River, in a real game
yet?

Dehr looks at Fallor and shrugs.

DEHR
Sellers is our number one guy.

PATTON
I know that. But have you seen
this guy in action?

DEHR
Well, yeah. He's got real good
lateral movement...and he's big.

PATTON
How big? Six-one, six-three?

DEHR
Six-seven.

Patton discontinues his writing and looks up in disbelief.

PATTON
And he can move?

DEHR
Yeah.

PATTON
Well, any guy with the word "Quick"
in his name is gonna get some
playing time. Set me up to see him
practice with the goalie coach.

DEHR
That's Bill Angstrom...the goalie
coach.

PATTON
Uh, huh. So, what is he, this
Quick River? Indian?

DEHR
I think they prefer the term,
"Native American."

Patton sighs and nods.

PATTON
Right.

INT. PRACTICE RINK (LOCKER ROOM) - DAY

Webster is entering the locker room through a door as the team is assembling. Fallor sees the captain dressed in jeans and a T-shirt and approaches him.

FALLOR

Hey, Bruce, thanks for coming down to the meeting.

Webster nods and takes a seat on one of the benches where the rest of the team members are gathering. Fallor stands in front of the crowd and waits for the players to settle down.

FALLOR (CONT'D)

All right, gentlemen...I've called this team meeting in order to introduce you to your new head coach, Dale Patton. (to Patton) Dale?

Patton steps forward and somewhat nervously shuffles in front of the players. He then clears his throat as Dehr and Fallor watch him closely.

PATTON

Boys...

Patton picks up a stick and holds it awkwardly.

PATTON (CONT'D)

I played this fine sport when I was a youngster. I was a right winger in the RIHA -

An unidentified player coughs loudly and the others laugh.

PATTON (CONT'D)

Well, I won't lie to you. I sucked. I skated like a slug, I saw the ice like Ray Charles, and my slapshot was the Shirley Temple of all slapshots."

SLEGR

Like Bruce!

The team laughs as Bruce Webster grins and shakes his head.

PATTON

As you can imagine, it didn't take me long to figure out that I wasn't the next Gretzky. So, I quit playing.

(MORE)

PATTON (CONT'D)

I missed it, but some of us know when to admit defeat. Well, the yearning called me back. But no amount of love for the game could make me a better player when I simply didn't have the skills or talent necessary to make it in the league. So, I decided to coach.

Patton places the stick he's holding gently down on the bench in front of him.

PATTON (CONT'D)

Now, some of you may never have heard of the RIHA, but where I come from, that organization is more important than sex!

Some of the players chuckle. Fallor leans up against a wall and folds his arms.

PATTON (CONT'D)

Obviously not for everyone. Now there was one team there. They were belittled, laughed at, joked about, kicked around...and even their name was something of a joke. The Lafayette Beavers, if you can believe it.

More chuckles erupt from the crowd.

PATTON (CONT'D)

Not to bring up bad memories, but I believe you boys are in a similar situation. You're laughed at...

Several players look up from chuckling and seem a bit perturbed.

PATTON (CONT'D)

...kicked around, belittled...with the one difference being that those Beavers were a bunch of twelve and thirteen year-olds.

Dead silence pervades the room as he begins to walk around slowly.

PATTON (CONT'D)

And guess what? I began coaching them...gave them just an ounce of confidence, and they took the championship for six consecutive seasons.

Fallor looks around the room at the players and is impressed with Patton's oratory skills.

PATTON (CONT'D)

I'm no miracle worker and I'm certainly not crazy enough to promise you boys a Wellington Cup. What I will do, though, is try my damndest to bring a little confidence back to this club. You boys have a buttload of talent. I can see that in your stats...on paper.

The head coach stops and steps up onto a bench to see everyone at a glance.

PATTON (CONT'D)

"On paper" means zilch. I want your stats to speak for themselves ...on the ice. I'm going to review each of you and mark your strengths. I may be scrambling up the lines a bit here and there...or I may be trashing the whole line-up altogether.

Webster looks up at Patton for the first time.

PATTON (CONT'D)

What I want you to do is work with me. If you're moved around, do not take this as an insult. Before I'm done, there will be changes. All I ask is that you indulge me and help me to improve the hidden talents that I KNOW this club possesses. Follow my lead...and I'll promise you the playoffs.

INT. PATTON'S OFFICE - DAY

Bruce Webster enters the office and Patton motions for him to take a seat. The captain sits in the chair opposite the desk.

PATTON

Bruce, I would like to talk with you about your role of leadership on the team. Now, I know your record. I know that you have been a great asset on this team. But there's obviously something wrong right now.

The captain looks around at the paraphernalia on the walls as if he's debating in his head about discussing the subject.

PATTON (CONT'D)

In order for the young guys to get motivated, they need to see that their captain is motivated.

When Patton sees that Webster isn't responding, he tries another tack.

PATTON (CONT'D)

Who's your assistant captain?

WEBSTER

Frannie.

PATTON

Francois Nicolet, right?

Webster nods and then stares at the head coach.

PATTON (CONT'D)

Well, I want the two of you to get together and come up with a list of your ideas on who is complimented by whom. Skating-wise.

Webster appears puzzled.

WEBSTER

You want our input on line match-ups?

PATTON

Why? Don't you have opinions?

WEBSTER

Well, yeah. I just never expected anyone to ask.

PATTON

How's the top line?

WEBSTER

Your problem isn't in the top line.
It's in the second.

PATTON

How so?

WEBSTER

Well, you've got Ondruska on the
win and Czerkovski centering him
and Slegr. No offense, but
Czerkovski can't see the ice for
shit.

PATTON

Who should be centering then?

WEBSTER

Andrei should center.

PATTON

Ondruska?

WEBSTER

(nodding)

And Hand and Kelly on the third
line are miscommunicating all the
time. Put Bordeleau on with Kelly
and then you're talkin' quality
defense.

Patton smiles and nods slowly.

PATTON

Get together with Nicolet and flesh
out the changes and suggestions.
I'll review them and put in my own
observations and we'll see how it
pans out.

Webster stands and goes to walk out. He stops and turns to
face the new head coach.

WEBSTER

Are you for real?

Patton merely smiles as Webster shakes his head and leaves
the office.

INT. PRACTICE RINK (ICE) - DAY

Patton is watching BENJAMIN SELLERS, the Storms starting goalie, blocking shots on goal. The players are stepping up individually and shooting hard SLAPSHOTS at him.

BILL ANGSTROM, the goalie coach, stands ahead of Patton and is monitoring the saves. Patton leans over and whispers something to Angstrom.

ANGSTROM
Wrap-around!

DOMINIK SLEGR, a right winger, takes the puck and skates it up. He skates up toward the left side of the net as Sellers automatically moves to the opposite side of the net, awaiting the wrap-around. Slegr suddenly SHOOTS the puck into the open side of the net. Sellers is surprised.

ANGSTROM (CONT'D)
Sellers! Why didn't you defend the net?

SELLERS
You said "wrap-around!" That wasn't a wrap-around!

Patton steps into plain view.

PATTON
In a real game, with Ferris or Holland bearing down on you...you think they're going to give you a heads-up on what shot they're going to use?

Sellers swigs water from his water bottle and spits it out, glaring at Patton.

PATTON (CONT'D)
I want you to defend every square inch of that net at all times, Ben.

SELLERS
(saluting sarcastically)
Aye, aye, captain!

The goalie puts his mask back down and resumes his position. Across the ice, Webster is watching the event as it plays out.

INT. PATTON APARTMENT (LIVING ROOM) - NIGHT

Patton is sitting in his favorite chair, his big dog sleeping at his feet. He has papers scattered all over the chair, coffee table and his lap as he studies the roster and makes notations with pencil.

Virginia enters the room and sets down a cup of steaming hot tea as she puts her hand on his shoulder. He doesn't look up from his work.

INT. PRACTICE RINK (ICE) - DAY

Patton studies the defensemen, wingers, and centers who are skating on the ice. Webster is on the ice, as well, pointing and talking (inaudible dialogue). Patton sees this and is pleased.

Dehr is also on the ice, barking orders (inaudible dialogue) and blowing his whistle for speed drills.

INT. PATTON'S OFFICE - DAY

Patton is speaking to FRANCOIS NICOLET, the assistant captain (inaudible dialogue) who leans forward and begins drawing a diagram on paper. Patton leans forward to see what he's working on. Nicolet begins circling the diagram with his hand and then speaking. Patton nods and offers his own suggestions.

INT. PATTON APARTMENT (DINING ROOM) - NIGHT

Patton and his wife are talking at the dinner table (inaudible dialogue). Patton starts writing on his clipboard which sits next to his dinner plate. Virginia reaches over and takes the pencil from his hand. He looks up and beckons with an outstretched palm. She says "no" (inaudible dialogue) with a shake of her head. Then, "Eat." He picks up his fork and knife and begins cutting.

INT. ESSEX ARENA - LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Patton stands before his team as they sit on the benches awaiting his wisdom.

PATTON

Well, this is our first real test, isn't it. The Tidal Waves are a strong team and they'll attempt to skate the puck into the zone.

(MORE)

PATTON (CONT'D)

They don't like to dump and chase.
 (he pauses and looks uncertain) Be
 aware of that. You've all been
 working extremely hard and there
 have been improvements. There are
 still some kinks to be worked out,
 but in the meantime, I want you all
 to go out there and play the best
 damned hockey you can!

INT. ESSEX ARENA - NIGHT

The players from both the New York Storms and the TENNESSEE
 TIDAL WAVES are on the ice, practicing. The stands are
 virtually empty of FANS. A few are waving banners for the
 home team.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

You're listening to five-fifty,
 WSPT radio for the live broadcast
 of the first pre-season game
 between the New York Storms and the
 Tennessee Tidal Waves.

SECOND COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

This will be the first game, also,
 for the new head coach of the
 Storms, Dale Patton, who comes to
 us from the Rhode Island Hockey
 league.

INT. ESSEX ARENA (ICE) - NIGHT

The puck DROPS to start the beginning of the game. The
 Storms players are seen being SLAMMED around and muscled over
 for the puck. There are constant miscues on Storms plays.

Suddenly, Webster breaks away from the pack and drives up ice
 with the puck. There's a big SLAPSHOT from his stick and he
 scores! The fans ROAR their approval as Webster is
 congratulated by CASIMIR ROMANOV, his left winger, DAVE
 HAMMOND, his right winger, and his two defensemen, Nicolet
 and PETR REICHEL.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

That was a thunderbolt as the
 Storms go on top, one to nothing,
 courtesy of Bruce Webster and the
 top line.

The Tidal Waves immediately come back and score five
 unanswered goals in the first period.

SECOND COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

This is a beaten club. The small glimmer of hope provided by the captain has been completely washed away by inept play and terrible miscues by the Storms.

The period-ending horn SOUNDS and the exhausted players begin to file off for the locker room.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

So, at the end of the first, the Tidal Waves lead it by a score of five to one.

INT. ESSEX ARENA (LOCKER ROOM) - NIGHT

Patton stands in front of his dissatisfied players.

PATTON

Patience. That is the key here. You boys are rushing the plays and you're making stupid decisions. If you hold onto the puck for a little longer, you'll control the puck a little longer.

The players look beaten and tired. They are dressed for the next period. Dehr watches Patton react to the first period mistakes.

PATTON (CONT'D)

And there's absolutely no reason to retaliate when you're down by that score. No reason. Don't go chasing around the guy who checked you. Look for the puck. Find it, get it, and pass it to your brother. Concentrate on the goals right now, not the hits. Let's go.

INT. ESSEX ARENA (ICE) - NIGHT

The Storms continue to make terrible errors in judgment as the Tidal Waves score two more goals. The hole is deepening.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

I'm not sure what to make of this Storms team under the new head coach. They appear to be confused and hesitant to strike back.

Patton continues to watch from the bench silently as the Tidal Waves score again from the blue line, a 40-foot goal! Dehr studies Patton, ready to jump in anytime.

INT. ESSEX ARENA (STORMS BENCH) - NIGHT

Patton indicates a time-out. He pulls Sellers from the goal and turns to NATHANIEL QUICK RIVER.

PATTON
All right, Quick River, you're in.

Quick River looks shocked.

QUICK RIVER
I'm in?

PATTON
Get out there!

Sellers skates over to the bench as Quick River is stepping over the wall onto the ice.

SELLERS
Give me some goddam defensemen with half a brain between 'em and maybe I'll stop a puck!

PATTON
You let in five soft goals, Ben.
That score should be three to one.

SELLERS
That's horseshit!

Patton ignores the goalie as he SLAMS his equipment behind the bench.

INT. ESSEX ARENA (ICE) - NIGHT

Quick River takes his place in the goal mouth and begins stretching exercises.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
So, Coach Patton takes out Sellers and puts in a rookie by the name of Quick River. And for those of you listening at home, I have to apologize, but I don't even have the player's first name in my rosters.

Tennessee takes possession of the puck and skates up ice with it. The Tidal Waves SHOOT the puck rapidly on Quick River, but he makes a spectacular save. Then another...and another!

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
Oh, what an unbelievable display!

The period-ending horn SOUNDS as Quick River has completely shut down the Tidal Waves' scoring prowess.

SECOND COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
Well, we may not have his first name, but this young goalie has shown some outrageous skills in this second period. Twenty-two saves on twenty-two shots! A perfect performance so far!

INT. ESSEX ARENA (ICE) - NIGHT

Reichel, a first-line defenseman, has the puck poke-checked (stolen) from his stick in his own zone following an errant pass from Nicolet and the Tidal Waves take advantage of this mistake by swarming the net and SHOOTING the puck multiple times. Quick River makes four consecutive saves, but the fifth SHOT is impossible to stop as it is redirected into the net by the stick of a Tennessee player.

A disappointed Quick River shakes his head as his own players come up and PAT him on the helmet in consolation.

Patton watches closely from the bench as the horn SOUNDS and the game ends 9-1.

EXT. PATTON APARTMENT (DRIVEWAY) - NIGHT

A car pulls up into the driveway and stops near the building. The car motor TURNS OFF, the lights go out, and the door opens. Patton climbs dejectedly out of his vehicle, carrying a briefcase. He walks to the front door and opens it with his keys. He closes the front door behind him.

INT. PATTON APARTMENT (LIVING ROOM) - NIGHT

Patton is THROWING logs on the fire in the brick fireplace as Virginia sits on the sofa with a novel.

PATTON
And that Sellers is such a
condescending shit!

VIRGINIA

On the bright side, that goalie,
Quick Silver, was unbelievable.

Patton pauses, looks over at his wife who fails to realize that she's called the player by the wrong name, and he starts laughing.

INT. ESSEX ARENA (LOCKER ROOM) - DAY

A dry pen board shows the list of losses for the Storms:
Tidal Waves 9-1 (L), Revolution 3-0 (L), Arctics 5-2 (L),
Blades 1-0 (L), Gremlins 3-2 (L), Sea Monsters 2-1 (L),
Rogues 8-2 (L)

Patton watches as Dehr adds the newest loss to the bottom of the list: Hammerheads 3-1 (L)

INT. BEAUMONT'S OFFICE - DAY

Fallor is pacing the owner's office floor.

FALLOR

These losses are piling up, Craig.
I'm really sorry, but I think we
fucked up here with Patton.

BEAUMONT

Relax, Brian. Things will be
different in the regular season.
This is just pre-season. Things
will change. I can feel it.

FALLOR

I tend to disagree with you this
time.

INT. SYRACUSE ARENA - NIGHT

The Storms are leaving the ice sullenly. The scoreboard shows the Syracuse Cutters have won the game 5-0 as the crowd ROARS their approval.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

Well, I can only say that, at least
it's over.

SECOND COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

Yeah. Thank God for small favors.

INT. SYRACUSE ARENA (LOCKER ROOM) - NIGHT

Patton SLAMS the door to the locker room, startling everyone, and walks into a very silent room as the players are hanging their heads or avoiding the coach's gaze.

PATTON

Twenty-seven odd-man rushes!

The players cringe as he shouts out the statistics against them.

PATTON (CONT'D)

Fourteen giveaways! And eight
blown power play opportunities!
Need I say more?

Patton regards the room and gets absolutely no response to his rantings.

PATTON (CONT'D)

Fine. Speed drills tomorrow
morning.
(players begin to grumble)
Lots of them!

Patton then turns and SLAMS the door as he leaves.

EXT. PATTON HOME (BACK YARD) - DAY

Patton and a friend are playing horseshoes.

PATTON

And there's no team camaraderie or
sense of urgency at all.

Patton walks to the opposite end of the sand pit to recover the horseshoes.

FRIEND

Oh, I almost forgot...

He pulls a folded newspaper from his back pocket.

FRIEND (CONT'D)

I saw this article in the Essex
County News. It's about the River
Beasts.

Patton takes the newspaper as the friend points to the article.

FRIEND (CONT'D)
That's the PHL farm team for the
Storms, right?

PATTON
Yeah.

Patton's eyes quickly scan the article.

PATTON (CONT'D)
River Beast sensation, Sebastian
Crowe, huh?

INT. HOCKEY ARENA (RIVER BEASTS BENCH) - NIGHT

SEBASTIAN CROWE gains the puck, weaves quickly up ice, fakes out two forwards, splits the defensemen and leaves himself in a one-on-one battle with the goalie for the PHILADELPHIA PFOG.

The left winger SHOOTs for the five-hole (between the goalie's legs) catches his own rebound, lifts it over the goalie's stacked pads and scores top-shelf! His TEAMMATES surround him as he smiles broadly.

INT. HOCKEY ARENA (STANDS) - NIGHT

Patton sits quietly watching Crowe celebrate as a sea of FANS jump to their feet all around the seated coach.

INT. HOCKEY ARENA (HALLWAY) - NIGHT

Crowe is walking down the corridor carrying a shoulder bag when his COACH pokes his head out into the hall.

COACH
Hey, Crowe! You got a meeting
tomorrow morning at eight with
Coach Patton of the Storms. Dress
up...and don't be late.

Crowe stares silently at the coach as if he's unperturbed by the news.

INT. PATTON'S OFFICE - DAY

Patton hears a soft KNOCK on his door.

PATTON
Come in.

Crowe enters the office timidly.

PATTON (CONT'D)
Hey, Sebastian, you made it. Have
a seat.

The rookie sits down uncomfortably and looks around the office in wonder.

PATTON (CONT'D)
Coffee?

Crowe shakes his head and stares at the coach.

PATTON (CONT'D)
I saw you play last night and I
have to say, I was quite impressed.
You have an excellent record with
the River Beasts and I'm interested
in bringing you up to play for the
Storms. Whadaya think?

Crowe hesitates as his eyes search the room for an answer.

PATTON (CONT'D)
I know it's a big adjustment and
the schedule is even more
demanding. But, if you bring your
level of enthusiasm with you, I
promise you, you'll get the ice
time.

The rookie suddenly darts his gaze back to the head coach.

CROWE
More ice time?

PATTON
I guarantee it.

CROWE
Do I get to keep my sticks?

Patton merely smiles.

INT. ESSEX ARENA (LOCKER ROOM) - DAY

Crowe timidly enters the locker room and is greeted by unfriendly gazes. He makes his way toward his locker, navigating the mass of equipment piled there.

CZERKOVSKI
Fuck!

The Russian center, DIMITRI CZERKOVSKI, enters the locker room in a foul mood, SLAMMING everything in his path. He spots Crowe and immediately makes a beeline for him. He gets up in Crowe's face.

CZERKOVSKI (CONT'D)
 (angrily in Russian
 accent)
 You're the little bastard who takes
 my spot on the roster!

Wester stands suddenly.

WEBSTER
 Lay off, Dimitri!

Czerkovski whirls on the captain.

CZERKOVSKI
 Don't think I don't know who is
 behind this!

Webster and Czerkovski have a brief staring contest before the Russian turns back on Crowe.

CZERKOVSKI (CONT'D)
 You are playing with the big boys
 now. Watch your step.

Czerkovski leaves the locker room, THROWING things out of his way as he goes. Crowe's new linemate, Slegr, approaches him.

CROWE
 What a prick.

Slegr extends his hand.

SLEGR
 (with Czech accent)
 Dominik. I'm your new linemate.

CROWE
 Um, Sebastian...nice to meet you.

SLEGR
 Don't worry about him. He's an
 asshole.

Crowe walks over toward his locker and notices a jersey hanging over the locker door with the number "06" on it. He quickly turns and approaches Dehr.

CROWE
Excuse me, coach, but that number
is wrong.

DEHR
What?

CROWE
The number on my jersey. It's
wrong.

DEHR
Look, kid, just go see Coach Patton
about it, all right?

INT. PATTON'S OFFICE - DAY

Crowe enters the office.

CROWE
Sir, the uh...the number on my
jersey is wrong. I'm zero-zero.

PATTON
Well, son, your new number is six.
There are no double zeros in the
CHL.

CROWE
But, coach, there's a reason for
the double zeros. See, all the
great players in hockey had or have
double numbers.

PATTON
Oh, yeah, like Gretzky in the NHL,
right? Ninety-nine.

CROWE
Well, yeah...but what about sixty-
six, Mario Lemieux? And Ray
Bourque, seventy-seven. And
Messier, eleven?

PATTON
The jersey numbers are not what
makes the players great, Crowe.

CROWE
(passionately)
Zhitnik, Roy, Hamrlik, Primeau,
Coffey, Koivu, Lindros, Turgeon -

PATTON
I understand your point, son.

CROWE
Pronger, Nolan, Oates -

PATTON
(holding up a hand)
I get your point. However, your
number is still six.

CROWE
But, six -

PATTON
Look...it's only a number.

Crowe rises slowly and goes to leave the office. Then he turns.

CROWE
I'm very, very superstitious.

Finally, he leaves and Patton shakes his head and laughs softly.

INT. LEXINGTON COURT ARENA (LOCKER ROOM) - NIGHT

Patton stands before the assembled team prior to their pre-season game against the Guardians

PATTON
The recent line shufflings are meant to enhance the strengths of the team as a whole. I told you that this would be happening. None of you should be surprised. I've taken a lot of time to evaluate your good points and your weaknesses and I've had help from many different sources.

Czerkovski is seething.

PATTON (CONT'D)
Now, the top line remains unchanged. They were the strongest line. We've got some new faces and I want you guys to help them out as much as possible. The second line is different, as well as the third and the fourth. Find your rhythm and use it.

A thunderous APPLAUSE breaks out above through the very walls of the room. Patton looks up and regards the sounds.

PATTON (CONT'D)

You are in the sacred home of the New York Guardians...Lexington Court Arena. I don't have to tell you how important the rivalry between our two teams is, though. You already know. Gentlemen...we are the black sheep of the CHL. We have been the embarrassment of the league for more than a decade.

The players seem somewhat offended by this statement.

PATTON (CONT'D)

Why do you think it is that we're based out on Staten Island? Because they can't stand us. They're sickened by the fact that we are the red-headed stepchild that no one wants to admit is related.

Webster looks around at his fellow players.

PATTON (CONT'D)

I want you to go out there and show the league and the world that we will not be ridiculed anymore. If they score a goal, you forget it and think about equaling on your next shift. Don't lose sight of the defensive end. Go out there and just do your best. Let's go!

The players get up and leave the locker room without much enthusiasm. Patton stops Sellers as he is following the pack.

PATTON (CONT'D)

Ben, you've got to be stellar tonight. I want to give a fighting chance to these guys on the new lines.

Sellers stares at Patton for a moment, but says nothing and walks out the door. Dehr and Patton exchange glances.

PATTON (CONT'D)

Well, either he makes a difference tonight or he'll find himself number two.

Dehr PATS the head coach's shoulder.

INT. LEXINGTON COURT ARENA (ICE) - NIGHT

The warm-ups of the PLAYERS on the ice are taking place.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

Many changes in the line-up for the Storms tonight. This will be quite interesting. Rookies Christian Blake and former River Beast, Sebastian Crowe, will be on the ice tonight for their very first CHL game.

SECOND COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

Both of these young men will be linemates on the second line. Bordeleau replaces Hand on the third line, who's a healthy scratch for this game.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

And this surprising move, Dimitri Czerkovski has been shuffled from the second down to the fourth line. The rookie, Crowe, replaces the Russian in that left wing slot.

INT. LEXINGTON COURT ARENA (STORMS BENCH) - NIGHT

Crowe is intently watching the ice and mouthing inaudible words to himself, just as he does before every shift. He stands and climbs quickly over the boards and onto the ice.

INT. LEXINGTON COURT ARENA (ICE) - NIGHT

The second line gains possession of the puck behind their net and ANDREI ONDRUSKA, the center, passes it to Sleggr.

They break out of their zone and Sleggr crosses the puck neatly to Crowe who bursts forward and spins around the Guardian's defender.

He fakes out the next Guardian and flips it over the stacked pads of the goalie. The red light goes on, but the LCA crowd is relatively silent as his teammates congratulate Crowe.

TEUFFEL

(shouting in German
accent)

(MORE)

TEUFFEL (CONT'D)
That's a hell of a way to break
into the league, my friend!

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
So, on his very first puck carry up
CHL ice, Sebastian Crowe puts the
frozen rubber right past Davis!

Crowe is beaming as he teammates continue to PAT him on the
helmet.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. LEXINGTON COURT ARENA (ICE) - NIGHT

A frustrated Sellers is BANGING his stick angrily on the ice
behind the net as the Guardians rejoice at another goal. The
period-ending horn SOUNDS.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
Well, Sellers has been absolutely
peppered with shots from all
different locations here in the
first period, resulting in four
Guardians' goals.

The players are leaving the ice dejectedly.

SECOND COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
Coach Patton has a bright spot in
all of this, though, as newcomer
Sebastian Crowe has single-handedly
cut that lead in half by tallying
two goals of his own.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
Will we see a hat trick by a rookie
on his first CHL outing tonight?
Or will the stingy Guardians
defense shut down this young
upstart?

INT. LEXINGTON COURT ARENA (LOCKER ROOM) - NIGHT

Patton enters the locker room as the team is drying off from
their showers and gearing up. He beckons Crowe with a
finger. The rookie approaches him hesitantly, almost as a
scorned child.

PATTON

Now, son, I know that you're excited and motivated and this is Lexington Court Arena, but remember ...you've got teammates. It's great that you've got two goals...and you may even get the trick...but you have to use your team. That's what they're there for. Don't be a loner out there.

Crowe pauses as he regards the words of his head coach and then seems to lighten his tone in his reply.

CROWE

But, coach, it's not about scoring goals, right? It's about winning.

Patton nods in slight frustration at the young rookie's inability to understand the "big picture."

PATTON

Just do me a personal favor and share a little.

The coach PATS Crowe on the shoulder and walks away.

INT. LEXINGTON COURT ARENA (ICE) - NIGHT

All the players along the Storms bench are shown with unhappy looks on their faces as the crowd is ROARING with pleasure.

The Guardians players are gathered on the ice near Sellers in celebration of yet another goal.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

That's the second goal in less than two minutes and this crowd is going nuts.

Quick River with his massive frame doesn't climb over the boards, but literally steps over the boards to enter the ice. He begins skating slowly toward the goal. Sellers takes off his mask and begins skating toward the bench, wildly cursing and flailing his stick in protestation.

SECOND COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

I think it's safe to say that Sellers is a "bit perturbed" at being yanked from the ice.

The commentators laugh as Quick River gets set in goal.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

Well, Coach Patton has decided to pull Sellers in favor of rookie goalie, Nathaniel Quick River. His first game for the Storms was also in relief of a beleaguered Sellers. Quick River had allowed one goal in thirty-six shots against the Tidal Waves.

INT. LEXINGTON COURT ARENA (STORMS BENCH) - NIGHT

Crowe is staring up at the scoreboard that reads 6-2. Webster skates up toward the bench and regards Crowe.

WEBSTER

Hey, hotdog! Why don't you go for the hat trick?

Crowe climbs over the boards without a reply and gains the ice as Patton watches the rookie's reaction to the comment.

INT. LEXINGTON COURT ARENA (ICE) - NIGHT

Crowe's line enters their zone and Quick River quick-passes it to Crowe. He skates it up, passes to Ondruska, who lets it through to Slegr. Crowe bursts forward, muscles through one defenseman, and sets up on the left side of the net.

Blake and Rudi Teuffel, Crowe's defensemen, join the rush and Slegr throws the puck at the net. The goalie BATS it down and attempts to cover it up with his glove, but Crowe's stick blade is too quick and SWIPES the puck from beneath the glove, lifting it handily over the netminder.

The light goes on and suddenly Crowe is viciously CROSS-CHECKED from behind, going DOWN in a heap, face first. The players gather to start PUSHING and SHOVING.

SECOND COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

Oh! Dorsett cross-checks Crowe from behind and he goes down hard! That was a late hit and a bad penalty to take as the momentum now swings to the Storms!

Crowe is still face down on the ice and unmoving. Suddenly, blood starts pooling quickly on the ice under Crowe's helmeted head and the REFEREE frantically BLOWS a whistle several times.

A DOCTOR and TRAINER run out onto the ice and they evaluate the rookie.

Crowe is lifted onto a stretcher and taken off the ice. As he is being taken away, some hats begin raining down upon the ice surface. Then, suddenly, a deluge of hats is seen.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

Can you believe your eyes? Those hats are for the hat trick that this young Storms player just scored moments ago. I think these Guardians fans appreciate the show that number six has put on tonight. Let's hope he's okay.

SECOND COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

So, Dorsett gets the cross-checking penalty and the game misconduct and is ejected from the game. That adds up to a whopping seven-minute power play for this Storms team...and a wonderful opportunity to even this game.

Patton follows the stretcher as it is being led down the corridor. Clean-up crews begin to clean up both the hundreds of hats and the blood from the surface of the ice.

INT. LEXINGTON COURT ARENA (TRAINER'S ROOM) - NIGHT

Patton is by Crowe's side as the doctor is attending to Crowe's chin.

DOCTOR

He's got a nasty laceration under his chin. Probably cut it on his own stick when he fell.

PATTON

How you feeling?

CROWE

A little dizzy.

PATTON

You had a fantastic game tonight, Sebastian. I see a lot of encouraging developments.

CROWE

When do I get to go back into the game?

The doctor smiles as he attends to Crowe's wound. Patton shakes his head slowly.

PATTON

You're done for the remainder of the game, Sebastian.

CROWE

What? But I -

PATTON

And the remaining two pre-season games.

CROWE

Why? But this is -

PATTON

Save it for the regular season, son.

INT. LEXINGTON COURT ARENA (ICE) - NIGHT

In Crowe's absence, the second line tears up the ice and scores two power play goals in rapid succession.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

Crowe has been replaced by Alexandre Nokalev and the second line is making good on its power play time. The score is six to five and it certainly looks like the Guardians are back on their heels.

The Guardians throw everything they have at Quick River, but he denies them over and over again.

SECOND COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

They should be calling this game, "the night of the rookies!"

The game-ending horn SOUNDS and the game ends a respectable 6-5. The players congratulate Quick River on a great game, even though they lost.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

So, all five of the Storms goals were supplied by the second line.

SECOND COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
 Coach Patton has put together this second line just recently, with the additions of Crowe and Blake and it has already proven to be a very potent and dangerous line, indeed.

INT. PATTON'S CAR - DAY

Patton is listening to the radio while he is driving.

RADIO HOST
 And the Guardians had another pre-season win against the Storms this time out. They are eight and two in the pre-season.

SIDEKICK
 Yeah, and what are the Storms? Like, forty-five and oh!

RADIO HOST
 You're listening to Gary and the Gang at five-fifty, WSPT, so stick -

Patton angrily CLICKS off the radio.

INT. PRACTICE RINK (ICE) - DAY

The players are seen skating and SHOOTING. Sellers and Quick River are seen making SAVES on pucks and Dehr is seen BLOWING his whistle and point.

Suddenly, Dehr's attention is yanked away from his work.

PATTON (O.S.)
 Crowe, what the hell's wrong with you? Would you focus?

Dehr looks over and sees a group of players skating and Crowe is among them, only he is skating backwards. Patton is in the stands on his feet, yelling in the rookie's direction.

DEHR
 CROWE!

Crowe looks toward Dehr and suddenly stops skating as his face falls.

DEHR (CONT'D)
 Get your rookie ass over here!

Crowe immediately skates over toward the assistant head coach.

DEHR (CONT'D)
Don't you start fucking up a good line!

CROWE
Coach...he said I can't play in the pre-season.

DEHR
Is that what this high school bullshit is about? Look, you may think this is funny, but that man's job is real important to him. You're not gonna get fired if we lose. You'll just get your stupid ass traded or you'll get a ticket back down to the minors. But that man could be fired for losing.

CROWE
Sorry.

DEHR
Get back in there and show a little respect!

Crowe skates off and Dehr BLOWS his whistle, directing his attention elsewhere.

DEHR (CONT'D)
Blake! You better not be dragging your feet again!

INT. BOWLING ALLEY - DAY

Gustafson and Quick River are waiting for Crowe to throw his bowling ball down the alley. He then THROWS a strike and whoops it up. He turns to see that his friends appear extremely bored.

CROWE
What's the matter?

GUSTAFSON
(in a Swedish accent)
This game is not fun.

Quick River nods in agreement.

CROWE

Well...what do you guys wanna do?

INT. COFFEE HOUSE - DAY

Crowe is sitting cramped between Quick River and Gustafson. The two are holding minute cups of cappuccino in their enormous hands. A POET is standing at the front of the coffee house, speaking into a microphone.

POET

The blue breeze washes over me and
I feel the sweetness of a summer's
cicada as it clicks its secret code
of infancy...

Crowe regards Gustafson and then Quick River, both larger than him, and rolls his eyes.

INT. CROWE'S APARTMENT (BEDROOM) - NIGHT

Crowe is laying on his bed, watching sports highlights on ESPN. At one point, his eyes travel to his jersey that's hanging over the bathroom door.

Climbing out of bed, he approaches the shirt, staring at the number "06" for a few moments. Opening a drawer in his dresser, he regards a pair of scissors sitting there. He looks back to his jersey.

INT. ESSEX ARENA - NIGHT

Fans are seen entering the Arena. Little children are carrying Storms banners. CLOSE on a ticket stub shows, "NY Storms vs. Chicago Cyclones." The Arena stands are sparsely populated.

INT. ESSEX ARENA (COMMENTATORS BOX) - NIGHT

Two COMMENTATORS, wired for sound, sit side-by-side as they shuffle papers in their hands.

FIRST COMMENTATOR

Welcome to the first game of the
Storms season against the Chicago
Cyclones here in Essex Arena.
There's quite a different team on
the ice for the Storms these days.

SECOND COMMENTATOR

Definitely. In case you haven't heard, the Storms are sporting both new players and a new head coach by the name of Dale Patton.

FIRST COMMENTATOR

The additions seem to have made an impact, too, as the new line-ups managed to win two out of the last three pre-season games.

SECOND COMMENTATOR

Most notably, the second-line right winger, Sebastian Crowe, and the new starting goalie for the Storms, Nathaniel Quick River, who has allowed just one goal in three games.

INT. ESSEX ARENA (LOCKER ROOM) - NIGHT

Patton is standing before his team.

PATTON

There's a simple formula that I use that seems to work for each new season, and for every player. That formula is this: Win the first, you'll be winners. Lose the first, you'll be losers.

Some players snicker. Patton regards the players with a stone face.

PATTON (CONT'D)

Think how easy it will be to face the second game of the season, knowing that you're undefeated going into it. You make the choice.

The players stare at the coach now with more serious gazes.

PATTON (CONT'D)

I want nothing fancy today. Just hard work and motivation. Let's go.

INT. ESSEX ARENA (ICE) - NIGHT

The players are lined up for the National Anthem. As the music PLAYS, some are mouthing the words. Crowe is mouthing different words.

CUT TO:

INT. ESSEX ARENA (ICE) - NIGHT

The puck is DROPPED and blades are KNOCKING it around.

The first line shift works hard as Webster grabs possession of the puck.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

Webster broke a CHL record last season when he passed Charlie Berk's Ironman Record of six hundred and forty-one consecutive games played without a miss. Webster broke that record and continues to build upon it with this first game of the season. He is currently playing his six hundred and forty-seventh game.

Crowe enters the ice and as he skates away, a sloppy number double zero is seen on the back of his jersey.

Quickly gaining the puck, Crowe skates it up and deftly flips it over the head of his opponent.

Ondruska seizes the puck as it bounces and skates it across the blue line and into the Chicago zone.

Suddenly, Crowe rockets past Ondruska and scoops the puck from his stick blade! Ondruska halts in mid-skate, completely stunned. Crowe takes a big SLAPSHOT and scores!

The CROWD ROARS and Crowe turns to find that his linemates are staring at him from across the ice. Then they slowly begin to skate toward the bench.

Crowe is puzzled and skates after them.

INT. ESSEX ARENA (STORMS BENCH) - NIGHT

Crowe enters the bench through the short door and his teammates are dead silent.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
 Storms goal...his first of the
 season...number six, Sebastian
 Crowwwwwwe!

Patton moves down the line of players and leans down toward Crowe.

PATTON
 Stay in your seat, son. That's
 your home for the rest of the game.

Crowe looks up in shock and cannot understand why everyone is so mad at him.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
 Assisted by number seventy-two...
 Andrei Ondrusska!

The crowd continues to roar their approval. Crowe looks down the bench again where everyone is completely ignoring him.

INT. ESSEX ARENA (ICE) - NIGHT

The game-ending horn SOUNDS as the Storms players congratulate Quick River.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
 So, Nathaniel Quick River gains his
 first regular season shutout for
 the Storms as they down the
 Cyclones one to nothing.

INT. CROWE'S APARTMENT (BEDROOM) - NIGHT

Crowe is in a darkened room watching ESPN sports highlights as the sportscaster talks over a replay of the Storms' earlier game.

SPORTSCASTER (V.O.)
 And here comes number six - or wait
 a minute - is it number zero-zero?
 Apparently, this rookie is a
 seamstress in his free time! He
 flips the puck and then - watch
 this - *steals* it from his own
 teammate - and scores! Look at
 that again!

Crowe watches silently without batting an eye.

SPORTSCASTER (V.O.)

The Storms win their first game by a score of one-*zip*, that lone goal supplied by Sebastian Crowe, who was subsequently benched by Coach Patton for his "unneighborly" conduct. This guy ain't foolin' around.

CAMERA finds poster on the wall above the television picturing Mario Lemieux.

INT. PATTON APARTMENT (DINING ROOM) - NIGHT

Patton sits at the dinner table with his wife.

PATTON

I don't know what to do about this kid. He's got the potential to be another Gretzky, but he plays with the mentality of a kid on the local pond.

He cuts up some meat on his plate and eats it.

VIRGINIA

This is his first big break, Dale. Maybe he's just nervous.

PATTON

Nervous.

INT. ESSEX ARENA (ICE) - NIGHT

Crowe is whooping it up after another goal. The crowd is UNHINGED. Crowe's linemates are once again skating off toward the bench without a word.

SECOND COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

This is not a good sign.

INT. ESSEX ARENA (STORMS BENCH) - NIGHT

Crowe sits on the bench and swigs water. Quick River skates up to the wall and raises his mask, leaning over close to Crowe.

QUICK RIVER

Perhaps you misunderstood me when I said, pass...the...puck!

He then puts his helmet back down, stares for a moment more, then skates off toward his goal.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
Somehow, I don't think Quick River was congratulating him.

SECOND COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
Back when I was in the league, we had a name for guys like Crowe. Of course, I can't repeat it on national television.

The crowd is shown roaring their approval of Crowe's latest goal.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
Well, the fans certainly don't seem to care as the Storms are about to go up three-and-oh on the season, easily defeating the Icebirds here tonight.

Crowe swigs water as he breathes heavily. The final horn SOUNDS.

INT. ESSEX ARENA (LOCKER ROOM) - NIGHT

Patton enters the locker room as the team is getting ready for the showers.

PATTON
Great job tonight, guys. That's your third in a row. I'm very impressed.

Dehr approaches Patton as he watches Crowe.

DEHR
Want me to talk to him?

Patton regards the rookie as he attempts to congratulate Reichel, but is rebuffed.

PATTON
No. I have a feeling things will work themselves out.

INT. ESSEX ARENA (HALLWAY) - NIGHT

Gustafson CLAPS Crowe on the shoulder as they are walking along the corridor, gear bags in hand.

GUSTAFSON

In the words of the wise man, Nate
Quick River: "Pass the puck!"

He begins laughing loudly.

CROWE

Not funny, Gus.

GUSTAFSON

If you don't start soon, I think,
you will have...zero-zero friends.
You know?

Gustafson walks off, leaving Crowe to ponder the words of the Swede.

INT. RELIC RINK - NIGHT

Patton is standing on a bench overlooking the team. Dehr is standing behind him.

PATTON

There is a lot to be said for
determination. You all have it.
You all display it.

The team is geared up and listening intently.

PATTON (CONT'D)

Without it, there is no eleven-oh-
and-two record. Let that sink in
for a moment.

Crowe is staring at his feet.

PATTON (CONT'D)

A lot of you say, "I can't figure
out what we're doing differently."
Well, I can honestly tell you that
you're not doing anything
differently. You're all doing
exactly the same things as before
...only better.

Sellers is reading a newspaper in the back. Webster sees it and SNAPS his fingers, getting the goalie's attention and Sellers scowls as he folds it up again.

PATTON (CONT'D)
 I don't think any of you got out of bed one morning and said, "I'm gonna change the way I pump my legs or the way I smash the shit outta the other guy on the boards."

Patton gazes around at the players.

PATTON (CONT'D)
 Romanov, when's the last time you changed up your slapshot?

Romanov, the first-line left winger, shrugs.

PATTON (CONT'D)
 Kelly, you have any new methods of standing some goon up at the blue line? No?

JIM KELLY, the third-line left winger smirks.

PATTON (CONT'D)
 Point is, none of you changed anything. You just got better at what you do. Now, each and every one of you is a well-oiled, fine-running engine, who as a whole machine, run as if you're unstoppable. Take a vital part of that engine out...
 (looks at Crowe)
 ...and the machine dies.

Patton STEPS DOWN off the bench and begins circulating among the platers. Their eyes all follow him.

PATTON (CONT'D)
 Ondruska! You like winning?

Ondruska develops a huge grin, to which the other players laugh. The coach smiles.

PATTON (CONT'D)
 Do you want that first "L" in the loss column?

ONDRUSKA
 No, sir.

PATTON
 How 'bout you, Wulf? Mrosek? You boys want your first loss?

CARTER WULF, the third-line center, and Valeri Mrosek, a fourth-line defenseman, both shake their heads.

PATTON (CONT'D)
Of course you don't. Who would?
Well, I have news that may come as
a shock. You *will* lose.

Crowe looks up at the coach for the first time. Some of the players murmur their disapproval.

PATTON (CONT'D)
Sooner or later, you'll lose. Keep
pushing out other finely-tuned
engines from this Staten Island
brotherhood and the well-oiled
machine dies.

Players stare intently.

PATTON (CONT'D)
Keep ignoring the whines and pings
of the engine that needs attention
and be prepared to lose. It will
happen. It is inevitable.

Patton walks by Webster and pauses.

PATTON (CONT'D)
Now, I'm not talking about coddling
the shiny new engine with the
polished chrome and built-in
cockiness. Us older, dirtier...

Patton SLAPS Webster on the shoulder, eliciting laughs from the others.

PATTON (CONT'D)
...grittier engines look like shit
alongside the new model.

TEUFFEL
(to Reichel)
Was ist...cockiness?

PATTON
No. I'm talking about accepting
the new engine for its diversity
and its desire to keep winning.

Quick River sneaks a glance at Crowe, who is now staring enraptured at the coach.

PATTON (CONT'D)

If you do this, you can all rise above pettiness and enormously inflated egos and truly realize that you are all brothers on the same team, fighting not for yourselves, but for each other. Then...and only then...can you put the fear of God in your opponent. Only then can the impossible prospect of an undefeated season be realized.

Some of the players begin to look pumped as they nod or grunt in agreement.

PATTON (CONT'D)

If you truly believe you're unbeatable...
 (increasing volume)
 ...you truly will be unbeatable. Let's go down in sports history as the first and only undefeated hockey club!

War cries permeate the locker room as the players stand and raise their sticks in salute.

PATTON (CONT'D)

Now, go out there and cook me up some delicious turtle soup!

INT. RELIC RINK (ICE) - NIGHT

Webster punishes a TURTLES PLAYER on the boards. Bordeleau LEVELS a player at the blue line. Quick River stoness the Turtles (disallows goals) over and over.

The clock shows 3:10 left in the first period. The Turtles fans are relatively quiet and signs of frustration are showing on the Turtles coaching staff.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

With two and a half minutes remaining here in the first period, the Storms lead the Turtles of Glenside by a score of four to nothing.

Crowe grabs the puck and begins to skate up ice when a Turtles player suddenly skates close and viciously SPEARS him! The rookie FALLS to the ice as Slegr quickly grabs the culprit and begins to PUMMEL him mercilessly.

Crowe leaves the ice with pain in his ribs as Quick River breathes fiercely, BANGING his stick angrily upon the ice.

Other players begin to PUSH and SHOVE each other as referees break up Slegr and the Turtles player and the penalties are announced.

INT. RELIC RINK (STORMS BENCH) - NIGHT

Patton smiles and nods imperceptibly at Dehr as Slegr yaps at the Turtles player across the referees who separate them. The coach leans over toward Crowe and indicates Slegr.

PATTON

Now they're fighting *for* you, not
with you.

Crowe looks up briefly, still wincing in pain.

INT. RELIC RINK (ICE) - NIGHT

The scoreboard shows a score of 8-0 and the stands are practically empty as the Turtles fans have left the building.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

Well, with just two minutes left in the game, the Turtles have little hope of pulling this one out of the loss column as the Storms have just man-handled this Glenside team for three straight periods.

SECOND COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

We haven't seen a rout like this in years. Nathaniel Quick River is a little under two minutes away from his fifth shut-out of the season.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

The other more exciting story tonight is Sebastian Crowe who is just one goal away from a CHL first. No player has ever scored nine goals in a single game. He has already broken the single game, single player goal record of seven goals, tallying all eight of the Storms goals tonight.

SECOND COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

In essence, Crowe is trying to be *the first player in Continental Hockey League history to achieve an outrageous triple hat-trick game!*

Crowe sets up for the face-off as he begins mouthing the silent words that fans are now well-familiar with.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

Well, there's Crowe's routine of talking to himself before the puck is dropped. I wonder what he says to himself.

SECOND COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

Probably adding up his points for the season so far. (both laugh) He can't believe it either.

The commentators laugh again as the puck is dropped. Crowe's line works hard to gain possession. Finally, they begin skating it up ice, but it's poke-checked away from Ondruska.

The Turtles bring it back down and SHOOT hard on Quick River who makes a phenomenal save. He suddenly whips the puck at a wide-open Crowe who's racing at full speed up ice, closely followed by Ondruska.

Crowe steps around one defender and enters the Turtles' zone.

SLOW MOTION

Crowe sees the Turtles goalie, who is unsure of where Crowe is going. Crowe looks across, sees Ondruska matching his speed, then looks back at the goalie. He hears a voice in his head saying "Pass the puck!"

CLOSE on Quick River's lips through the mask show him mouthing the words "Shoot it!"

The players on the bench are on their feet, shouting "Shoot it!" Dehr is pumping a fist in the air and shouting "Shoot it!"

Crowe suddenly passes the puck across to Ondruska who winds up for a big slapshot.

RESUME

Ondruska ONE-TIMES the puck and the goalie makes an easy glove SAVE.

The whistle BLOWS as Crowe slows to a stop in front of the net, regarding the wide-open hole in front of him. He THUMPS his stick loudly on the ice and skates off toward the bench angrily. Quick River's head drops.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

Well, that leaves only eleven seconds in the game and with number double zero off the ice, his prospects for a triple hat-trick game appear to be off the ice as well.

INT. RELIC RINK (STORMS BENCH) - NIGHT

Patton walks up to Crowe and PATS him on the shoulder. Crowe scowls as his head bows and the final horn SOUNDS bitter, echoing away.

INT. FALLOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Patton and Dehr are in Fallor's office.

PATTON

We should seriously look into getting this kid a multi-year contract now, before someone else grabs his attention.

DEHR

Seriously, Brian...this kid doesn't look happy right now and he's too good to lose.

FALLOR

So, he's hot now and everybody wants him. What happens if he suddenly gets cold and -

DEHR

I've seen a lot of flashes-in-the-pan, Brian. This kid is not one of them. Trust me.

FALLOR

I do trust you, but I want you two to trust me. Let's hold off and see what happens.

Patton and Dehr exchange glances. Nervous silence follows.

DEHR

Okay, so what about this double-zero business? Crowe says he wants new jerseys with the two zeros on them.

FALLOR

Give it to him.

DEHR

Yeah, but what about the Commissioner and the policy and -

FALLOR

Listen. As long as he keeps scoring like he is, I wouldn't give a shit if he wanted eight zeros on his back. We'll take the fines when they come.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - DAY

RANDALL USHER, host of TV's Sports Close-Up, is sitting in a chair next to Quick River.

TECHNICIAN (O.S.)

Three...two...one...

USHER

Good morning, New York. Thanks for tuning in. I'm Randall Usher and this is Sports Close-Up. If you live on the planet Earth and you pay attention to hockey, then you've undoubtedly seen our first guest in action on the ice.

Quick River, dressed in a suit and tie, dwarfs the television host sitting next to him.

USHER (CONT'D)

Nathaniel Quick River sits between the pipes for the New York Storms who currently defend the top spot in the Taggart Division.

(to Quick River)

Nathaniel...do you mind if I call you Nate?

QUICK RIVER

Yes.

USHER

(chuckling nervously)

All righty. Nathaniel, you're a rookie with this team and yet, you've managed to step up into the starting goalie slot in only a matter of a couple of games. Is there some animosity between yourself and Benjamin Sellers because of this?

QUICK RIVER

Ben is an excellent goalie and a great mentor. He's taught me many things. He is also a mature adult.

CUT TO:

INT. SELLERS HOME - DAY

Sellers THROWING a remote at the television as he listens to Quick River.

SELLERS

Fuck you...you cocksucker!

BACK TO:

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - DAY

Quick River brushes at his tie off-handedly.

QUICK RIVER

There is absolutely no animosity between us.

USHER

Your team also heralds the arrival of another amazing rookie player, Sebastian Crowe. We hear that you and he are actually very close personal friends.

Quick River nods and smiles amiably.

USHER (CONT'D)

How does he feel about all this sudden media attention and the comments about him possibly being the next Great One?

QUICK RIVER

It doesn't faze him at all. He's quite humbled by the whole experience.

CUT TO:

INT. CROWE'S APARTMENT (BEDROOM) - DAY

Crowe is in his bedroom hanging up yet another article about himself on his wall. The walls are completely covered in magazine covers and articles about him.

BACK TO:

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - DAY

Usher smiles and nods.

USHER

Is Coach Patton concerned that Crowe seems to be the only capable scorer on the team?

QUICK RIVER

All the guys are good scorers. The opportunities are not always there.

CUT TO:

INT. PRACTICE RINK (ICE) - DAY

A practice session on the ice where player after player is hitting a SLAPSHOT and missing the open net.

BACK TO:

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - DAY

Quick River is doing a cutesy finger-wiggle wave at the camera.

USHER

Now, you are listed as the first Native American goalie in the CHL, isn't that right?

QUICK RIVER

That's what I'm told.

USHER

That has got to be a source of pride for you and your people.

QUICK RIVER

(suddenly losing his smile)

My people?

(chuckles and adjusts his seat)

My people died out ages ago as a result of white barbarism in the Americas.

The host begins to lose his smile and looks nervously at the camera.

QUICK RIVER (CONT'D)

And even if they were alive today, they would *not* be proud of my participation in a sport that is completely dominated by the white man who has plagued my people's existence since the exploration of our lands by Europeans in the fifteen and sixteen hundreds.

The interviewer balks and regards a piece of paper in his hand.

USHER

It-it says here that...

(swallows loudly)

...that you're f-from Staten Island.

Quick River suddenly begins laughing heartily, startling the interviewer.

QUICK RIVER

Born and raised, brother!

Usher smiles nervously, again looking at the camera with uncertainty.

USHER

Now, you are twelve points ahead of the Princeton Hellcats and fifteen points ahead of the Icebirds and the Revolution. The Guardians trail you by nineteen points. What do you see as a stumbling block to the team during the rest of the season?

(MORE)

USHER (CONT'D)

You are currently twenty-one, two-two-and-one and it doesn't look like you're showing any signs of stopping. Who, at this point, can really beat you?

QUICK RIVER

Well, we've got two losses. Obviously, we can be beaten.

Usher chuckles at this joke.

QUICK RIVER (CONT'D)

The Hellcats are very strong and we had a lot of trouble with Tucson. They can beat us and we don't think of ourselves as invulnerable. But as long as our team stays healthy -

USHER

And number zero-zero is in the line-up...

QUICK RIVER

And Sebastian is confident, then we'll be very tough to beat.

USHER

Thank you so much for being here today, Nathaniel.

QUICK RIVER

My pleasure.

INT. MORRIS KELLY STADIUM (ICE) - NIGHT

The players are congratulating Quick River on another win as the WINNIPEG ARCTICS are leaving the ice.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

Tally another "W" for the Storms as they defeat the Winnipeg Arctics three to one tonight. There doesn't seem to be much anyone can do against this New York juggernaut.

EXT. ESSEX ARENA - DAY

Crowe is leaving the arena with a shoulder bag and enters the parking lot area.

JOHNNY BERGEN is leaning up against an expensive-looking car. As Crowe gets closer, the man straightens.

BERGEN
Sebastian?

Crowe slows and looks in his direction.

BERGEN (CONT'D)
My name's Johnny Bergen. I'm a sports agent. I was wondering if you have an agent yet. I know you're new to the league and all, but...

Crowe shakes his hand.

CROWE
No...not represented. Are you an agent?

BERGEN
I am. Let me ask you something. Do you think you're important to the team?

Crowe nods as he places his shoulder bag on the ground.

BERGEN (CONT'D)
Well, if you're important, then you should be getting compensated for your hard work fairly, right?

Bergen presents a business card and gives it to Crowe.

BERGEN (CONT'D)
Give me a call. I will make it well worth your while.

The agent then walks back to the expensive car, gets in and ROARS off.

Crowe approaches his beat-up Honda and pauses to look at his own car and then gazes off toward Bergen's car as it zips around the corner.

INT. BOWLING ALLEY - DAY

Crowe is sitting down, keeping score of the game between himself and Quick River. The goalie THROWS yet another gutter ball. He turns in frustration.

QUICK RIVER
I hate this game!

Crowe chuckles and shakes his head.

CROWE
Hey, Nathan...I met this guy
yesterday. He says he's a sports
agent and wants to represent me.
Whadaya think?

QUICK RIVER
Just be careful. Don't sign
anything or decide on anything
until you find out about him.
Agents can be snakes.

Quick River takes his second ball and stands ready to throw
it down the alley.

CROWE
Whoa, whoa, whoa! You already got
your second frame, buddy.

Quick River SLAMS the ball down on the rack.

QUICK RIVER
I hate this stupid game!

INT. ESSEX ARENA (STORMS BENCH) - NIGHT

Webster and Crowe are sitting side by side, sweating,
breathing heavily, and watching the action on the ice. Crowe
leans in close to Webster and whispers something to him.

WEBSTER
What's this guy's name?

CROWE
Johnny Bergen.

WEBSTER
I've heard the name before.
Listen, don't sign anything yet.
Let me check him out first.

Czerkovski is staring at the ice, but eavesdropping a couple
of seats away.

INT. VARIOUS HOCKEY ARENAS - NIGHT

Establishing different scenes of play on the ice, views of the benches, and great SAVES by Quick River are seen in rapid succession. Also included are intermittent shots of the scoreboards and glimpses of fist fights between frustrated players.

Consistent Storms victories are established throughout the scenes, which end with Crowe raising his arms over his head in triumph as he is surrounded by his second-line teammates.

INT. CROWE'S APARTMENT (BEDROOM) - NIGHT

Crowe is laying on his bed with pillows propped behind him. All around him, his bed is covered in different magazines with his photo gracing the covers: GQ, People, Time, Sports Illustrated and Vanity Fair. He is watching television sports highlights showing him scoring, rushing and sliding to block a puck shot. Grabbing the remote, he TURNS UP the volume.

SPORTSCASTER (V.O.)

...the top scorer in the CHL.
Looking at the stat sheet, it's clear that Crowe is the second lowest paid rookie in the Continental Hockey League. Is it conceivable that the top sniper on the ice is just about at the bottom of the pay scale?

Crowe stares blankly at the television screen, showing his name near the bottom of the list.

INT. PATTON'S OFFICE - DAY

Fallor enters the office.

FALLOR

Did you see the broadcast about Crowe last night on Sportscenter?

Patton nods silently.

PATTON

I told you we needed to do something.

FALLOR

Well, there's no time for I-told-you-so's.

(MORE)

FALLOR (CONT'D)

Let's get this kid a raise to make him happy and then work on a multi-year contract. Talk to him. You have a way with Crowe. Let's get him on the phone now, while we still can.

PATTON

I'll call him.

INT. CROWE'S APARTMENT (LIVING ROOM) - DAY

Crowe walks in the front door in sweats and sneakers. He approaches the answering machine which is flashing. Pressing play, he goes to the kitchen to get a bottled water.

AGENT ONE (V.O.)

Hi, Mr. Crowe, this is Bernard Hutchinson. I'm an agent and want to talk to you about representation. Give me a...

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CROWE'S APARTMENT (LIVING ROOM) - DAY

Crowe is peeling an orange near the answering machine.

AGENT THIRTY-SIX (V.O.)

...if there's a question, I'll be here. Okay, thanks!

Crowe listens to the final message.

PATTON (V.O.)

Hey, son. It's Coach Patton. Give me a call at the office or at home. I need to talk with you. 'Bye.

Crowe separates an orange wedge, pops it into his mouth and then reaches for a business card on his counter, regarding it as the answering machine CLICKS off. He reaches over and pushes a button.

AUTOMATED VOICE (V.O.)

Clear thirty-seven messages.

Crowe continues looking at the card and then picks up the phone.

INT. BERGEN'S OFFICE - DAY

CLOSE on a pen signing the name, "Sebastian Crowe" on a line. Bergen shakes Crowe's hand.

BERGEN
Congratulations, Sebastian. You're now represented. Now we'll get you the money that you're actually worth.

CROWE
Absolutely.

INT. FALLOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Patton enters the office and Beaumont is there with Fallor.

FALLOR
We just got a call from Crowe's agent.

Patton closes the door gently and approaches the desk.

PATTON
I called him yesterday, but couldn't reach him.

BEAUMONT
I wish you had, Dale. That son-of-a-bitch agent is asking for a one-year, six-million dollar contract.

PATTON
Six-mill -

Beaumont nods affirmingly.

PATTON (CONT'D)
Doesn't he realize that there's no way we can afford that?

BEAUMONT
The agent is Johnny Bergen, out of Paramus, New Jersey. Know him?

Patton shakes his head.

BEAUMONT (CONT'D)

He's represented just about every malcontent in the League and he's always involved in some sort of arbitration hearing with one player or another. The guy's nothing but poison to every organization he's had dealings with.

PATTON

How the hell did he get Crowe?

FALLOR

It doesn't really matter now. He represents Crowe and we have to deal with it.

BEAUMONT

You found Crowe, Dale. Maybe you can talk some sense into him.

Patton stares at his two superiors disappointedly.

PATTON

I'll try. But I can't promise anything.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

The players are gathered inside in groups. Crowe, Quick River and Gustafson are shooting pool. Webster, Ondruska and Nicolet are sitting at the bar, joking around with the FEMALE BARTENDER.

Czerkovski is with several others across the bar, talking drunkenly. Blake, Mrosek, Teuffel, HAND and Wulf are arguing good-naturedly with a few belligerent GUARDIANS FANS.

Suddenly, Czerkovski's voice rises above the level of the LOUD music that's playing from the speakers. Crowe is ready to take his shot on the pool table.

CZERKOVSKI (O.S.)

(loudly and slurred)

...that bitch, Crowe!

Crowe looks up from his shot and spies Czerkovski shooting off his mouth across the bar.

CZERKOVSKI (CONT'D)

...too fucking good for the rest of us!

Crowe takes a step toward the group, but Gustafson stops him with a hand on his arm.

GUSTAFSON

Let it go. He's drunk.

QUICK RIVER

Yeah, c'mon, Sebastian. I actually like this game.

Crowe looks at his friends and then leaves the table. Gustafson looks at Quick River who huffs loudly and follows Crowe.

Czerkovski sees Crowe approaching and suddenly shuts his mouth.

CROWE

What's your fucking problem?

CZERKOVSKI

You are...my friend.

CROWE

I'm not your friend, dumb-ass. If you have a problem, why don't you just say it to my face?

Webster suddenly swivels on his bar stool to see what the commotion is behind him.

Czerkovski stands unsteadily and points in Crowe's face.

CZERKOVSKI

The pretty ballerina is asking for six-million dollars...for a one year contract!

Crowe appears genuinely puzzled. He does not know about the contract submitted by his agent.

CROWE

What the hell are you talking about?

Czerkovski takes an intoxicated step forward and gets in Crowe's face.

CZERKOVSKI

You are nothing, little dwarf! You don't deserve six cents!

Webster stands and walks toward them.

WEBSTER
C'mon guys, back off!

As Webster speaks, Crowe turns his head to look at the captain. In that moment, Czerkovski throws a tremendous sucker PUNCH which lands squarely on Crowe's jaw.

WEBSTER (CONT'D)
Hey!

Crowe FALLS to the floor. Sitting up, he touches his lower lip and it's bleeding.

WEBSTER (CONT'D)
All right, Dimitri, that's enough!

Crowe climbs quickly to his feet and suddenly CRACKS the pool stick over Czerkovski's forehead. The Russian goes DOWN as Quick River wraps his arms around Crowe and holds him.

Crowe's eyes are on fire and Webster worriedly looks down at an unconscious Czerkovski, bleeding from his brow.

EXT. BAR - NIGHT

Crowe is being led out of the bar by a POLICEMAN. The flashing lights of the squad car are reflected on the old brick building and faces of the players.

PARAMEDICS are loading the stretcher with Czerkovski into the back of the ambulance. Quick River watches as Crowe is helped into the squad car.

Webster is in the background, giving a statement to the POLICE OFFICER.

Crowe hangs his head low in the back of the squad car as it moves away slowly.

INT. FALLOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Crowe is sitting in a chair, his head down, opposite the General Manager.

FALLOR
I don't give a rat's ass what
Czerkovski did or said that
offended you! Quite frankly, I
don't even give a shit if you're
the next Gretzky! You put one of
your own teammates into the
hospital last night!

(MORE)

FALLOR (CONT'D)
Not only are you stupid beyond
belief, you are out of work!

Crowe looks up in shock.

FALLOR (CONT'D)
As of today, you are formally
suspended until further notice.
And I'd better not get a phone call
from that scumbag agent of yours.

Crowe opens his mouth to protest.

FALLOR (CONT'D)
(quietly while gritting
teeth)
Don't...even.

Crowe closes his mouth slowly.

FALLOR (CONT'D)
Get your ass outta my sight.

INT. PRACTICE RINK (LOCKER ROOM) - DAY

Patton is standing with his hands clasped behind his back
before the seated players in their civvies. Dehr and Fallor
are both present. It is quiet in the room.

PATTON
Last night, an incident occurred
that I refuse to debate about. Two
teammates got into a fight at a
local bar. One ended up in jail
and the other in the hospital.

Patton sighs loudly as the players remain quiet.

PATTON (CONT'D)
I don't have to tell you how upset
and disappointed we are about this.
Many of you boys were there and
this was somehow not stopped.

Several players start to protest.

PATTON (CONT'D)
This is not a debate. This is a
lecture. This behavior will end
now. I will not tolerate it. Mr.
Fallor and Mr. Beaumont will not
tolerate it.

(MORE)

PATTON (CONT'D)
 As of this morning, Crowe is under
 suspension from play.

The players look up in shock. Quick River rises in fury and
 walks out on the meeting, loudly SLAMMING the door.

PATTON (CONT'D)
 (watching the door as it
 SLAMS)
 The suspension is indefinite at
 this point, so don't ask me how
 long it will be, because I don't
 know. That decision is not mine.

GUSTAFSON
 Czerkovski is the asshole and Crowe
 gets the suspension.

TEUFFEL
 I hope Czerkovski starts scoring
 goals.

There is muffled agreement among the players as Patton gazes
 sullenly about the room.

PATTON
 Crowe struck his teammate and put
 him in the hospital. That's all
 there is to this story as far as
 I'm concerned.

INT. PRACTICE RINK (HALLWAY) - DAY

Dehr and Patton are walking slowly down the corridor.

DEHR
 We're gonna have to get real good,
 defensively...real quick. 'Cause
 you and I both know that none of
 these knuckleheads can score like
 that kid.

A door is heard closing and the two look up to see Webster
 approaching them. He looks as if he is going to ignore them.
 He walks by and then suddenly stops and turns.

WEBSTER
 Look, I understand the suspension
 and all. But, honestly, this is
 fucked up.

Patton raises a hand as if to speak.

WEBSTER (CONT'D)

No, you can wait now. Hear me out. This may be my last chance at winning the Cup. And I can actually, literally taste it this year. You guys take Crowe out of the line-up and I'm telling you...I'm left with a really bad taste in my mouth.

(a beat as he stares)

You catch my drift?

Patton nods and Webster goes to walk away. He turns back with one more thought.

WEBSTER (CONT'D)

We lose our chance this year, coach ...I fuckin' bail. I'm retiring.

Patton looks up suddenly.

WEBSTER (CONT'D)

I'm done being a loser.

INT. BAR - DAY

A BARTENDER is wiping down the long bar counter as the sparse PATRONS strain to listen to the television.

OLD MAN

Could you turn up the volume on this thing, for Christ's sake?

BARTENDER

Just read it, Frank. I got it set on closed-caption.

OLD MAN

Closed-caption?

(squinting at television)

If I put the goddam Hubble telescope on my face, I couldn't read those tiny little words!

The bartender shakes his head in frustration and mumbles as he grabs the remote control, TURNING UP the volume.

SPORTSCASTER

...stated that Crowe's suspension was indefinite.

(MORE)

SPORTSCASTER (CONT'D)

When Fallor was asked if the suspension would interfere with the rookie's chances of playing in the All-Star Game, the Storms general manager replied, "That doesn't concern me."

INT. ESSEX ARENA (ICE) - NIGHT

Quick River BLOCKS a puck. It's picked up by a CINCINNATI ENIGMAS PLAYER and SHOT again. Quick River makes a KICK-SAVE, then goes into the butterfly stance and makes another SAVE. Finally, the puck sails past Quick River, BOUNCING back off his stick and into the net.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

So, the Enigmas score once again and Nathan Quick River is getting very little effort out there tonight from his defensemen.

SECOND COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

And since Crowe's suspension has been in effect, the second line's performance has been completely sub-standard.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ESSEX ARENA (ICE) - NIGHT

The final horn SOUNDS as the Storms dejectedly leave the ice.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

There's the horn and the New York Storms suffer only their sixth loss of the season by losing to the Cincinnati Enigmas by a score of two to nothing.

INT. PRACTICE RINK (ICE) - DAY

Crowe, Gustafson, Sleggr, Ondruska, Blake and Teuffel are practice skating, passing the puck, setting up and SHOOTING on Quick River.

Sleggr begins to discuss a maneuver with Crowe and Ondruska, using his hands to demonstrate.

INT. PRACTICE RINK (HALLWAY) - DAY

Dehr is walking and spots a REPORTER with her CAMERAMAN in tow moving in his direction. She approaches Dehr and thrusts a microphone forward.

REPORTER

Coach Dehr, could we ask a couple of questions?

Dehr hesitates momentarily.

REPORTER (CONT'D)

Is it true that Sebastian Crowe's suspension came as a result of an altercation between he and his teammate, Dimitri Czerkovski?

DEHR

I can't discuss the suspension or its reasons.

REPORTER

How long does Fallow intend on keeping the suspension in effect?

DEHR

I cannot...discuss...the suspension.

REPORTER

Well, does the fact that Crowe is practicing with his linemates mean that he'll be playing soon?

DEHR

Practicing?

Dehr begins to push past the reporter and her cameraman. He rushes down the corridor as the reporter indicates to her cameraman to follow. Dehr storms through the archway leading to the rink area.

Crowe and his linemates are on the ice ahead and Dehr begins to walk briskly down the steps toward them.

INT. PRACTICE RINK (ICE) - DAY

Crowe and the rest of the players are discussing strategy with Quick River listening in on the conversation.

DEHR (O.S.)

Crowe!

The players look up in Dehr's direction as he approaches the wall around the rink. The reporter and her cameraman are seen following.

DEHR (CONT'D)
What in the hell do you think
you're doing?

CROWE
Uh...practicing?

DEHR
Like hell, you are! Get off the
ice!

CROWE
Why?

DEHR
Does the word "suspension" mean
anything to you?

CROWE
I was suspended from playing, not
practicing.

DEHR
Get the hell off the ice!
(a beat)
Now!

Crowe stares in Dehr's direction for a long moment and suddenly leans over and SLAPS a puck down the length of the entire ice, HITTING the net on the opposite side. The puck never touches the ice.

CAMERAMAN
(taking his eye from the
camera)
Holy...

Crowe looks up at Dehr and angrily skates off, TOSSING his stick into the bench area.

Quick River lifts his mask and squints down the ice, letting out a low whistle.

DEHR
And don't any of you other
knuckleheads think about missing
practice as a formal protest,
either!

Dehr stomps off past the reporter and her cameraman.
Gustafson exchanges glances with Ondruska and Sleggr.

GUSTAFSON
Knuckleheads?

INT. PATTON APARTMENT (LIVING ROOM) - NIGHT

Patton is watching ESPN on television.

SPORTSCASTER (V.O.)
The indefinite suspension is still
in effect after twenty-three days
and there seems to be no sign of
light at the end of this tunnel.

COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
Sebastian Crowe remains on the
bench and not dressed for play, and
the New York Storms now find
themselves at a more familiar down-
to-Earth record of twenty-four,
fourteen, two and one.

Virginia approaches the living room doorway and leans against
the doorjamb behind Patton's chair.

SPORTSCASTER (V.O.)
Yes, indeed, the Storms have been
the Goliath of the CHL for the
first three months, but have
quickly fallen to third place in
the Taggart Division behind both
the Revolution and the Hellcats,
with the Icebirds and the Guardians
close on their heels.

COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
And now that we've hit the break,
we'll see exactly how that
suspension affects Crowe's chances
of playing in his first All-Star
Game.

INT. DINER - DAY

Crowe and Bergen are drinking coffee.

CROWE
All I'm saying is that I need to
get back to playing.
(MORE)

CROWE (CONT'D)

I don't care about contract disputes or arbitration. I wanna play.

BERGEN

Look, Sebastian, if the team continues to lose, they'll have no choice but to bring you out of suspension. And when that time comes, they'll pay any price.

CROWE

So, in other words, you don't give a shit about me playing. You just want the damn money!

Crowe gets up from his seat and begins to storm out of the diner.

BERGEN

Oh, c'mon, Sebastian. Show a little backbone.

Crowe leaves as Bergen sips his coffee and shakes his head.

EXT. PARK (JOGGING PATH) - DAY

Crowe, Quick River and Gustafson are jogging along the path.

CROWE

Bergen just doesn't understand my needs. And every time he submits another request for this contract to be signed, it just makes everything harder between me and upper management.

Quick River and Gustafson remain quiet. Two FEMALE JOGGERS pass them in the opposite direction. All three, without uttering a single word, change direction and follow the giggling girls.

QUICK RIVER

I think you should talk to Fallor.

CROWE

Oh, no. Fallor's still pissed at me because of the...

(finger quotes)

"Czerkovski incident."

GUSTAFSON

I think we should just hire a hit man to kill that asshole.

Quick River and Crowe exchange comical looks and chuckle.

GUSTAFSON (CONT'D)

I really think we should.

Quick River and Crowe laugh heartily. Their laughter fades as they jog off into the distance.

INT. PATTON'S OFFICE - DAY

Crowe enters the office after a soft KNOCK.

CROWE

Uh, coach?

PATTON

Let me guess. You want to know if we've signed it yet.

CROWE

Signed it? What are you talking about?

PATTON

The contract that your slimy agent dropped off today.

Crowe is suddenly saddened.

PATTON (CONT'D)

Do you understand the implications of this contract?

Crowe is silent because he truly does not understand the repercussions of this contract dispute.

PATTON (CONT'D)

Look, son, you're in the big leagues now. I suggest you either "a" start communicating with your agent, or "b" start directing his actions because, quite honestly, you're heading down a dark road.

Crowe begins shaking his head in genuine fear.

PATTON (CONT'D)
 You'll find your career going down
 the toilet before long, because a
 chump like this Bergen only cares
 about the bottom line. It's
 happened before and you certainly
 aren't the first.

Crowe turns to depart.

PATTON (CONT'D)
 Besides, you may not be a headline
 for much longer.

Crowe turns back in puzzlement.

PATTON (CONT'D)
 Just heard that Super Mario's
 coming out of retirement.

CROWE
 Mario Lemieux's back?

Patton nods and then looks back down to his schedules. Crowe
 turns and leaves the office in a numb state.

INT. CROWE'S APARTMENT (BEDROOM) - NIGHT

Crowe stares at the poster of Mario Lemieux on the wall above
 the television from his bed. He glances at all the articles
 about himself that are stapled to the walls.

INT. ARNOLD PESCH ARENA (STORMS BENCH) - NIGHT

Crowe is sitting on the bench, his mouth moving to unheard
 words. Quick River is adjusting his gear.

QUICK RIVER
 Can I ask you a question?

CROWE
 (smirking)
 You just did.

Unflinching, Quick River nods.

QUICK RIVER
 What is it that you are always
 saying to yourself.

Crowe looks up toward him with an arched brow.

QUICK RIVER (CONT'D)
 (smirking back)
 Inquiring minds want to know.

CROWE
 I really can't tell you.

QUICK RIVER
 Why?

CROWE
 Because I'm very superstitious.

Quick River suddenly stops adjusting his equipment and stares out into the distance.

QUICK RIVER
 You know, my grandfather once told me that a person who talks to himself is not crazy, but in some way touched by the Great Spirit. A person who is touched is destined for much success.

His eyes focus back on Crowe who is staring up at the large goalie.

CROWE
 Fine.
 (a long beat)
 I always say the same thing over and over.

He then regards the goalie with a pointed finger.

CROWE (CONT'D)
 And you can't tell anyone!

QUICK RIVER
 I'm a titanium vault, brother.

CROWE
 All right. I repeat, "I am unbeatable. I am everywhere, I am everything and everything is me. No man can stop me for I am invincible."

QUICK RIVER
 Shakespeare?

CROWE
 (sniffing)
 Crowe.

Quick River nods and then regards the ice.

QUICK RIVER
Yeah...you are nuts.

Crowe bursts into laughter.

INT. ARNOLD PESCH ARENA (LOCKER ROOM) - NIGHT

Patton enters the locker room to a sullen crowd of players. Crowe is sitting at the back of the room by himself with his head down.

PATTON
So tell me, gentlemen. Is there some sacred rite that this team is treading upon by winning games? Because you boys have obviously decided we just aren't allowed to win games anymore. We're down three to one right now and I do believe that we're looking at another worthless loss.

Patton begins to pace and folds his arms as Dehr watches him walking behind the players.

PATTON (CONT'D)
I'm confused. Genuinely confused. On the one hand, we start off the new season with new players, new ideals...and we win! On the other, we attempt to build on this...and we lose.

He stops and CLAPS his hands loudly so that everyone turns to look at him.

PATTON (CONT'D)
So! Can anyone tell me what's going on? Someone, please! Enlighten me!

The players fiddle with their sticks and fidget in their seats.

PATTON (CONT'D)
Anyone?

SLEGR
Lift Crowe's suspension.

PATTON
Sorry, what?

SLEGR
(more loudly and
pronounced)
Lift...Crowe's...suspension!

Czerkovski looks up angrily.

PATTON
Well, that's not up to me.

BLAKE
That's bullshit, coach.

Patton glares at the rookie.

BLAKE (CONT'D)
Sir.

PATTON
It's not bullshit, Blake. Those
decisions are left to the powers
upstairs. I have no vote in that
matter.

WEBSTER
But you have input.

Patton looks over at the captain silently.

WEBSTER (CONT'D)
We...
(clears throat)
...as a team, have been talking.
And we think Sebastian has gotten
the point.

Crowe looks up for the first time. He finds that Webster is
staring directly at him.

WEBSTER (CONT'D)
We want a team meeting with Mr.
Beaumont and Brian. We want this
situation fixed immediately.

CZERKOVSKI
I refuse to play if he does!

GUSTAFSON
Aw, shut up for once in your life!

Quick River looks at Gustafson in surprise. Czerkovski scowls in the Swede's direction.

PATTON
You'll get your meeting.

Webster smiles triumphantly.

INT. FALLOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Patton enters the office quietly. Fallor is on the telephone.

FALLOR
Thanks...goodbye.

PATTON
The team wants a meeting.

FALLOR
Well, that's good timing then.

Patton looks confused.

FALLOR (CONT'D)
That was Grant Anderson.

PATTON
From the Dragons?

FALLOR
You got your deal, Dale.

Patton laughs and smiles broadly as he shakes Fallor's hand.

EXT. GOLF COURSE - DAY

Fallor stands with the team members gathered around him. They are all dressed casually and Patton and Dehr stand in the background. It is a beautiful sunny day.

FALLOR
You're probably wondering why I
chose this place for the team
meeting.

Some of the players nod in agreement or look around at the green surrounding them.

FALLOR (CONT'D)
 I felt that this would be a good
 place for the team to unwind before
 talking business. Look behind you.

The players turn and see Dehr and Patton standing next to
 golfing equipment.

FALLOR (CONT'D)
 There are clubs and buckets of
 balls for all you. I want you to
 just pick up a driver and a bucket
 and get on the driving range and
 start smacking balls.

The players exchange glances and look uninterested.

FALLOR (CONT'D)
 C'mon gentlemen, expand your
 horizons a little. Didn't any of
 you ever see "Happy Gilmore?"

No one budges.

DEHR
 Move it, ladies!

The players move for the equipment while groaning.

EXT. GOLF COURSE (DRIVING RANGE) - DAY

The players are lined up at the individual driving stations
 and are HITTING balls haphazardly. It's obvious that most of
 them are not good at this particular sport. And that's an
 understatement.

Fallor observes the players and smiles condescendingly. He
 resumes a stance and SMACKS the ball out to the 150-yard
 marker. He gazes out at the green and looks pleased.

CROWE (O.S.)
 Not a bad shot, sir.

Crowe, who is in the next driving station, is looking out on
 the green as well. Fallor smiles and holds out a palm,
 indicating "your turn."

Crowe nods and turns to address the ball. He takes a slice
 at the ball and KNOCKS it out to the 300-yard marker. Fallor
 stares with mouth open. Crowe begins to rub his wrist.

CROWE (CONT'D)
 Man...if only this wrist didn't
 hurt so much.

Fallor continues to stare, closes his mouth and narrows his eyes.

FALLOR
 (miffed)
 All right, boys! Play-time is
 over. Let's go discuss Storms
 business.

Crowe stares at him as he walks away and grins.

INT. GOLF COURSE (DINING HALL) - DAY

Webster stands at a huge table while everyone is seated in front of glasses of beer and wine and a banquet is laid out in front of them. Fallor is sitting at the head of the table and is listening intently.

WEBSTER
 So, we believe, as a team, that the
 single most important decision to
 make right now is to lift
 Sebastian's suspension. His
 absence is nothing but a
 disruption. We need to be whole
 again.

Webster takes his seat and Crowe looks anxiously at the general manager.

FALLOR
 Well put, Bruce. And I respect
 your input...
 (a beat as he looks at the
 rest of the table)
 ...as a team.
 (to Crowe)
 Sebastian, I believe the team has
 spoken. This suspension has gone
 on long enough. As of today, I am
 officially lifting your suspension.

The team cheers as Crowe is elated.

SLEGR
 Who is going to tell Dimitri?

It is suddenly apparent that Czerkovski is conspicuously absent from the dinner.

SLEGR (CONT'D)
Where is he anyway?

Fallor looks to Patton.

PATTON
Let's just say that Gus is going to
be getting a lot more ice time.

Gustafson looks up confused as the rest of the team gazes at the Swede. Crowe looks at a smiling Quick River who seems to have figured it out already.

INT. PRACTICE RINK (ICE) - DAY

Gustafson skates up to Quick River who is in full gear in front of his net.

GUSTAFSON
So, let me get this straight.
Crowe hits Czerkovski, gets
suspended. Then he comes back,
Czerkovski goes to Denver...and I
get to play?

QUICK RIVER
Ain't this a great country?

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Crowe is sitting at the bar and all the players are surrounding him, coaxing him to drink down another shot. There are already eleven empty shot glasses littering the bar in front of him.

Crowe drinks the shot and screws up his face into a scowl.

CROWE
(silly drunken grin)
I love all you guys...so much!

Webster looks at Nicolet and nods devilishly as the bartender SLAPS down another full shot glass in front of Crowe. The rookie looks at the glass and sees his own reflection in it.

INT. CROWE'S APARTMENT (BATHROOM) - DAY

Crowe stumbles into the bathroom, naked. He is severely hung-over. He approaches the mirror and mumbles unintelligible words, as if his mouth is full of cotton.

CROWE
Oh...my head.

SLOW ZOOM OUT

A Storms' logo is tattooed on his left butt cheek.

INT. PRACTICE RINK (LOCKER ROOM) - DAY

Crowe enters the locker room as catcalls and whistles start to flood the air.

CROWE
Very funny.

Dehr begins laughing as Crowe has trouble sitting down on the bench.

REICHEL
You're now the property of the New
York Storms!

WEBSTER (O.S.)
Hey, kid?

Crowe turns and sees a multitude of the veterans who are mooning him, revealing many Storms tattoos.

WEBSTER (CONT'D)
You're one of us now, hotdog!

Off Crowe's pained smirk, the song "New York, New York" by Frank Sinatra begins to PLAY. It continues over the next scene.

INT. VARIOUS HOCKEY ARENAS - NIGHT

Crowe's line is seen scoring on numerous occasions, as well as the fourth Gustafson line. Unbelievable saves by Quick River are shown. Various scoreboards showing victory after victory are seen. The song, "New York, New York" fades as a young female Storms fan is shown waving a banner that says, "Se'Bastian of Hope" with lipstick kiss marks and hearts all around it.

INT. PATTON'S OFFICE - DAY

Crowe is sitting opposite Patton.

PATTON

We're back on track, winning again.
Feel good?

Crowe nods with a slight smile

CROWE

Feels amazing.

PATTON

There is one more major hurdle
though.

CROWE

The contract.

PATTON

This contract crap has got to go
away...like yesterday.

Crowe stares sullenly.

PATTON (CONT'D)

You can do so much more without
this guy, Bergen. Other *good*
agents would kill to represent you.

CROWE

But I already signed a contract to
have him represent me.

PATTON

Contracts are made to be broken.
And believe me, you ought to break
this one. He's an obstacle for
you, the team...for the whole
organization.

Crowe looks up into the coach's eyes.

PATTON (CONT'D)

You can do so much better. Fix it,
son. Before it goes too far.

INT. PRACTICE RINK (ICE) - NIGHT

Crowe is standing on the ice in regular clothes, but in ice skates. The rink is dark except for a choice few lights on the ice near the net. He is holding a hockey stick and there are dozens of pucks on the ice around his feet. He positions a puck and reaches back with his stick.

CROWE
 (grunting)
 Top left!

And he FIRES a puck that HITS the top left portion of the net. The net is already littered with many pucks.

CROWE (CONT'D)
 Top right!

He SLAPS another puck which HITS that exact spot.

CROWE (CONT'D)
 Bottom left!

The puck HITS the net in the spot indicated.

CROWE (CONT'D)
 Bottom right!

Again, the puck HITS its mark.

CROWE (CONT'D)
 Dead CENTER!

The pucks HITS dead center.

Breathing heavily, he regards the net.

CROWE (CONT'D)
 (murmuring)
 Again.

Crowe sets up and brings his stick behind him, high in the air.

CROWE (CONT'D)
 DEAD CENTER!

CLOSE on the puck as it is STRUCK by the blade of his stick.

INT. DINER - DAY

Crowe and Bergen are sitting across from each other in a booth.

CROWE
 I want you to cancel the contract
 for the six million.

BERGEN

No, Sebastian. I'm your agent and I say it's not in your best interest. Do you think these guys care about you? You get injured and see how quickly they turn their backs on you.

Crowe is fuming, but quiet.

BERGEN (CONT'D)

(stirring his coffee)

I don't care about the money. I'm just looking out for you.

CROWE

You care about me? All I've asked you to do since we started was let me play hockey.

Bergen looks up warily. This is the first time that Crowe has raised his voice to the agent.

CROWE (CONT'D)

And all you've done is -

BERGEN

Be careful.

CROWE

All you've done is worry about the fucking money!

BERGEN

Am I supposed to work for free?

CROWE

You're right, Johnny. You shouldn't work for free. This contract crap -

BERGEN

Don't you want to be a winner, Sebastian?

Crowe nods slowly, looking Bergen dead in the eye.

CROWE

Yeah, I do. And that's why I gotta do this. You're fired.

Crowe suddenly stands as Bergen is flabbergasted. The rookie begins to walk away from the table.

BERGEN

Kid?

Crowe continues for the exit.

BERGEN (CONT'D)

Sebastian.

Crowe throws a ten dollar bill on the front counter and reaches for the door handle.

BERGEN (CONT'D)

Crowe!

A door is heard CLOSING loudly off screen.

All the patrons are at once noticing that Bergen has been abandoned. He suddenly sees that everyone is staring at him.

BERGEN (CONT'D)

Fuck off!

(looking for waiter)

Check!

INT. ESSEX ARENA (ICE) - NIGHT

Blake HITS a REBELS PLAYER with a massive check against the boards. The CRUNCH is highly audible.

INT. ESSEX ARENA (STORMS BENCH) - NIGHT

Crowe is sitting on the bench, breathing heavily after a shift on the ice. Gustafson is sitting on the bench next to his friend. The Swede is repeating inaudible words to himself and watching the ice intently.

Suddenly, the fourth-line left winger stands for his shift.

CROWE

Hey, Gus.

Gustafson looks down and stops mouthing the words.

CROWE (CONT'D)

Just like we did in practice,
right?

Gustafson nods as Crowe smiles up at him.

CROWE (CONT'D)

Go get 'em, you Swedish meatball!

INT. ESSEX ARENA (ICE) - NIGHT

Gustafson jumps over the boards onto the ice and skates toward the Storms zone.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

Now, if the Storms pull out this win in overtime, they advance to the playoffs by virtue of clinching the number one spot. That would automatically knock off Richmond's hopes of their own post-season run.

SECOND COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

Even though the Crowe-Ondruska-Slegr line has been devastating to the Rebels defense all season long, they've only managed one goal here in this game. Richmond's desperation is apparent as they scored late in the game to tie the tally and send this one into overtime.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

Both goalies have been brilliant in goal for these two talented clubs.

A face-off occurs and the Storms take control of the puck. They bring it up ice into the neutral zone.

Gustafson takes a pass from GRANT MOORE and races into the Richmond zone. He spins around the defender and approaches the goalie.

The teams stand and lean over their walls simultaneously to watch the action.

SLOW MOTION

Gustafson fakes a slapshot, causing the goalie to go down low. He TAPS it to his backhand. His breathing is heard as the roar of the crowd dies away to nothing but a HEARTBEAT.

He slides the puck around the back of the goalie's extended leg and it crosses the goal line!

RESUME

The CROWD ERUPTS in celebration as Gustafson glides backward into the boards, raising his arms. An air horn SOUNDS in the crowd as Gustafson is surrounded by his linemates and congratulated.

EXT. NEWSPAPER STAND - DAY

Newspapers hanging above a newsstand proclaim, "No, We're The Other New York Hockey Team!" and "Hard To Believe!" and "How Sweet It Is!" and "Next Stop - The Playoffs!"

INT. PATTON APARTMENT (LIVING ROOM) - NIGHT

Patton pets his big dog as he sips coffee while watching television. Virginia enters the room and stares at him. He looks up at her.

VIRGINIA

What? Nothing to complain about today?

Patton chuckles and shakes his head.

INT. PRACTICE RINK (ICE/LOCKER ROOM) - DAY

Establishing scene where the players are seen during practice sessions on the ice and in the locker room as new strategies are discussed. The players' skills are improving and are demonstrated as they enjoy speed drills, accurate slapshots and great saves by Quick River.

Beaumont can be seen in the stands watching all of this and smiling approvingly.

Patton stands on the ice with Dehr at his side and has his arms folded as he studies every player.

Dramatic music fades into the roar of the crowd.

INT. SAVANNAH ARENA (ICE) - NIGHT

LEGEND READS: "Savannah, Georgia - April 2007"

Players are milling about on the ice awaiting a face-off.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

It appears that the Savannah Demons teeter on the brink of elimination here in the fourth game against the powerful and intimidating New York Storms.

SECOND COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

The Storms have taken games one, two and three and, with a score of six to nothing and under a minute left to play in this third period, barring a miracle of scoring unprecedented in modern-day sports, Savannah will be packing up for the Bahamas.

The puck is dropped and Webster controls it. He weaves in and out of traffic, takes it up ice, SHOOTs and scores through the five-hole (legs of the goalie)!

The CROWD is silenced, but the Storms go nuts. Webster points to Crowe and pulls the trigger of an imaginary gun in the rookie's direction. Crowe grins as Webster skates over toward the bench.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

And the Ironman of Hockey proves that he still possesses the big guns on the ice!

Off his celebration, we:

CUT TO:

INT. QUEBEC CENTER (ICE) - NIGHT

LEGEND READS: "Quebec, Canada - May 2007"

The scoreboard shows a score of 3-0 as the Storms and the QUEBEC DEFENDERS are setting up for a face-off.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

It appears to be a complete mirror image of the last series against Savannah as the Quebec Defenders find themselves confused and downcast at their complete lack of scoring ability.

SECOND COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

The Storms quickly swept the Demons, with Quick River gaining four consecutive shutouts. Is it conceivable that this superhuman goalie could duplicate that feat for eight consecutive shutouts?

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
Folks, we are witnessing hockey
history here tonight.

The puck drops and Slegr gets it to Ondruska, to Crowe, to
Ondruska, Crowe, Slegr - ONE-TIMER - Score!

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
And it looks as though the Storms
are on their way to their first
Atlantic Conference finals in
almost twenty years!

CROWD ROARS slowly fade.

INT. BARBER SHOP - DAY

A newspaper is dropped onto a magazine table. The headline
reads, "Bedeviled! Storms Win Streak Ended By Princeton!"

INT. TECH SERVICES ARENA (ICE) - NIGHT

The arena is jam-packed and the Zamboni ice-polishing machine
glides over the icy surface of the rink, showing the
Princeton Hellcats logo in its center.

SECOND COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
A turn of fortune so far for this
New York club. The Storms still
unable to solve the riddle of the
defending Wellington Cup champ
Princeton Hellcats, a team that has
plagued them with losses throughout
the regular season.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
The Hellcats are now up by two
games to none and the Storms have
not responded to the desperation
that the fans must be feeling after
their team lost two straight at
home. Now, they have to try to
even the series here in the
Hellcat's Hole. Not a fun
prospect.

SECOND COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
No, not at all.

The song, "Running With the Devil" by Van Halen begins to
play.

It continues over the scenes of the HELLCATS and the Storms playing hard, both scoring, and both making great saves.

FANS are seen going crazy (some dressed like Hellcats with horns, pitchforks, barbed tails and all painted red).

There are mobs of players fighting which dissolves to a PAN of both penalty boxes as three Hellcats and four Storms players are in the "sin bin."

Blood on the ice is seen being cleaned up by crews and coaches are yelling as the music fades and the scoreboard shows a score of 2-2.

INT. TECH SERVICES ARENA (LOCKER ROOM) - NIGHT

The players' faces are seen, one by one.

PATTON (O.S.)

Guys...I've just gotten some news
and I wanted to share it with you.

Patton is seen straightening his tie, a sheet of paper in one hand.

PATTON (CONT'D)

As of a few minutes ago, the Denver
Dragons defeated the Houston
Emperors in Denver and have
advanced to the Wellington Cup
finals.

The players are staring in undivided attention.

PATTON (CONT'D)

I have a fax here from Dimitri
Czerkovski.
(handing paper to captain)
Bruce, I want you to read it to the
rest of the boys.

WEBSTER

(receiving paper and
reading)
Hey, you lousy...
(begins chuckling and
shaking head)
...you lousy pieces of shit. It
looks like the Dragons and the
Hellcats will be slugging it out in
the finals.

(MORE)

WEBSTER (CONT'D)

I knew you bunch of pathetic old women would be losers for one more season. See you next year. Enjoy your golfing.

QUICK RIVER

He knows how to spell pathetic?

The rest of the team begins to laugh.

PATTON

So, Czerkovski thinks that we're throwing in the towel. I have a question for all of you. Are we?

The team begins to look around at each other.

PATTON (CONT'D)

Because, you guys can quit if you want to. Just remember. You lose tonight's game and the next, Lord Wellington's Cup remains in this building.

Players are disgusted.

PATTON (CONT'D)

I don't want the Cup staying anywhere near this place. It's the Marshlands for God's sakes! It's a stinking swamp! Does Lord Wellington deserve to have his Cup sit in this hellhole for another whole year?

PLAYERS

(in scattered unison)

No!

PATTON

Then let's be the team that rescues the Cup from this leech-infested bog and bring dignity back to the most prestigious and sought-after prize in the world!

The players spout loud war cries.

PATTON (CONT'D)

Now, let's go make fools out of the defending champions!

The team exits the locker room to loud yelling and roaring. Webster is last out and as he walks near to the both Patton and Dehr, he hands the fax back to the head coach.

WEBSTER

Nice work, Shakespeare.

Patton smiles as he accepts the paper. Webster leaves the locker room.

DEHR

(just realizing the ploy)
You slick son-of-a-bitch.

They laugh as Patton CLAPS his assistant on the back.

INT. TECH SERVICES ARENA (ICE) - NIGHT

Bodies are CRUNCHING together. There is scoring everywhere. The scoreboard shows the third period winding down through these scenes. Crowe and Gustafson score and two more Hellcats score. The score is now 5-4.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

This game has been a monumental battle. Both teams valiantly maneuvering for the advantage. Crowe has been on fire and it seems he's finally breaking loose from the Hellcats' dominating grip.

SECOND COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

With four minutes remaining, the Storms cling to a five to four lead. Princeton has been stepping up the pressure on New York's defense. Quick River has been absolutely outstanding. He's done everything but stand on his head to keep this game in their grasp.

The puck drops and the Hellcats control. The Hellcats goalie skates off the ice.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

Well, there goes MacGregor, which means the Hellcats will have the extra attacker!

The Hellcats bring the puck into the Storms zone and put the pressure on the defense. Suddenly, Crowe poke-checks the puck and SLAPSHOTS it across the entire length of the ice, scoring! The Storms fans GO NUTS!

SECOND COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

The Storms have just shown the Hellcats that they refuse to go quietly!

The scene fades on the celebration of the team.

INT. TECH SERVICES ARENA (ICE) - NIGHT

The players are all over by the bench as Patton talks to them. The scoreboard shows a 5-1 lead for the Storms.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

Here we are in game six of the conference finals between the defending champion Princeton Hellcats and the Taggart Division champion New York Storms.

Fans are seen waving banners and whooping it up in the capacity crowd.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

What a roller coaster this team has been on. They started off the season with a twenty-two, two, two and oh record, suspend their rookie superstar, fall to under five hundred, lift the suspension, rocket to number one, taking the Taggart Division title, beating both the Demons and the Defenders in two four-game shutout series and then go down two games to none at home against the Hellcats.

SECOND COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

Then they won the last three straight games and are poised on the brink of the Wellington Cup finals with a win tonight.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

The third period is about to start and the Storms with an incredible five to one lead must be chomping at the bit with the prospect of meeting the Dragons in the finals.

SECOND COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

And with the nasty history between Crowe and Czerkowski, a Storms-Dragons final would prove to be monumentally brutal to be sure.

The Storms are dominating the Hellcats in every aspect of the game. The Storms just keep scoring and scoring. The coach of the Hellcats replaces his starting goalie with their back-up.

SECOND COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

MacGregor has been yanked from the ice, but there's really no remedy here. The Storms have so much momentum right now, it would be like trying to stop a speeding locomotive with a wall of marshmallows.

The final horn SOUNDS as PANDEMONIUM breaks out. The Storms bench clears as the players rush the ice to congratulate Quick River.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

And so, the unlikely defeat of the champion Princeton Hellcats is complete as the New York Storms now advance to the Wellington Cup final to meet the Denver Dragons!

The celebration of the team on the ice moves toward the bench as Patton and Dehr applaud and pump their fists.

INT. PRACTICE RINK (ICE) - NIGHT

Crowe is going through his slapshot ritual as Webster quietly enters the stands from a hallway. He slowly descends the steps as Crowe winds up for a big blast.

CROWE

(grunting)

DEAD CENTER!

A loud THUNK sounds as the puck HITS the wall behind the net. An astonished Crowe skates slowly behind the net to find the puck laying on the ice. Bending down, he examines the net, only to find that he has ripped a hole clean through the twine.

WEBSTER

In all my years of hockey, I've only seen that twice.

Crowe is startled by Webster's sudden appearance.

CROWE
Seen what?

WEBSTER
A slapshot that rips through the net.

Webster steps onto the ice and walks toward the rookie.

WEBSTER (CONT'D)
You're the second person I've seen do that.

CROWE
Who was the first?

WEBSTER
Your hero. Mario Lemieux.

Crowe's eyes widen and he straightens, coming slowly around the net to face Webster.

WEBSTER (CONT'D)
I was visiting family in Pittsburgh ...that's where I'm from originally. I was at the old Civic Center. The Penguins were playing the Blackhawks. It was beautiful. Mario grabbed the puck, skated up ice, passed it across the ice and it just came right back to him. He caught it, stopped it, and wound up.

Webster raises his arms to mimic the shot.

WEBSTER (CONT'D)
Boom! Slams it home and it hits the wall!

Webster pauses as he bends down and picks up a stray puck, turning it over in his hand.

WEBSTER (CONT'D)
The play was whistled dead 'cause the light came on...but the puck was sitting behind the net. The Penguins coach was pointing at the net, the players were pushing each other...and there was Super Mario.

(MORE)

WEBSTER (CONT'D)

Skating alone in tight circles by himself, waiting. Quietly patient. Then the announcement. A goal!

Webster looks Crowe in the eye and smirks.

WEBSTER (CONT'D)

The replay showed it over and over from every possible angle. The puck had ripped clean through the net...I'll never forget it.

Crowe stares at his captain and breaks out of his trance momentarily.

CROWE

Lots of players rip through the net.

Webster tosses the puck to Crowe, who catches it.

WEBSTER

Not me.

Crowe continues to stare at Webster.

WEBSTER (CONT'D)

Go get some sleep, hotdog. You're gonna need it for tomorrow.

INT. ESSEX ARENA (ICE) - NIGHT

The National Anthem PLAYS as Crowe is seen ritually mouthing his now-familiar words. Czerkovski stands a small distance away and is rudely BANGING his stick on the ice during the song. The other Storms players give Czerkovski ominous looks.

INT. ESSEX ARENA (COMMENTATORS BOX) - NIGHT

The two commentators are seated in chairs behind glass which overlooks the entire rink as the Anthem ends.

FIRST COMMENTATOR

Game one of the Wellington Cup final is about to begin here in the Arena as the Atlantic Conference Champion New York Storms host the Pacific Conference Champion Denver Dragons. This series promises to be a hard-fought battle for the two teams.

(MORE)

FIRST COMMENTATOR (CONT'D)

Both were dominant in their respective conferences during the regular and the post season, and both are equally intimidating in the scoring department.

SECOND COMMENTATOR

Yeah, the Storms have only a slight advantage in goals scored for, but would you look at the goals against! Crowley has let by an average of four goals per game and the Dragons' high scoring ability appears to be what got them here to the final.

FIRST COMMENTATOR

In contrast, Storms goalie, Nathaniel Quick River, has shut down most every offense in the Continental Hockey League, posting a league-leading Goals Against Average of just point-five-seven. That is an incredible statistic for a veteran goalie, let alone a rookie.

SECOND COMMENTATOR

But this team is all about rookies, isn't it? Number zero-zero, Sebastian Crowe, and number forty-two, Mikael Gustafson, have been tearing up the ice and scoring seemingly at will. Crowe was brought up from the River Beasts by Coach Patton and just ate up the top scorer's list, posting the number one position immediately, and retaining that throughout the season.

FIRST COMMENTATOR

A season that saw the youngster suspended from play for more than a month!

SECOND COMMENTATOR

That's right. This young man is the sole reason that the Storms are where they are today.

INT. ESSEX ARENA (ICE) - NIGHT

Play begins. Webster is punishing players, Coach Patton is pointing and shouting. Quick River is making fantastic saves. Crowe and Gustafson are making great skating maneuvers.

Each time Crowe takes the ice, Czerkovski watches ominously from the bench.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
Here's Crowe, takes the pass! He's
rocketing up ice, winds up, shoots!
He scores!

Crowe celebrates with his comrades on the ice.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
And so, the New York sharpshooter,
as on so many other occasions,
draws first blood for the Storms!

The DRAGONS PLAYERS immediately crash the net at the other end and score on Quick River, the puck sliding through thick traffic and skipping under his pads.

Crowe's head drops for a moment as he shakes it and stretches his muscles.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
This Denver club doesn't intend on
giving the Storms even an ounce of
momentum.

SECOND COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
Yeah. Momentum to the Storms is
like blood in a pool of sharks.

This comment segues into the CLASSICAL PIECE, "Romeo and Juliet: the Montagues and Capulets" section by Prokofiev (1:34 to 3:09) to emphasize the struggles between the two titanic teams. The scenes of hits and grappling and saves are matched with each rise and fall of the powerful crescendos, until the music fades to a dull ROAR of a crowd into the next scene.

INT. PELLIER AUTOMOTIVE ARENA (ICE) - NIGHT

The logo of the Denver Dragons is seen from above in the center of the ice as the players skate over and around it.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
Game six is proving to be that battle for desperation. The Storms are up in the series by three games to two, but have committed an awful lot of penalties here in the third period. They have fallen behind late in the game and with a score of two to one, the Dragons look to hold off a late flurry by either the Crowe or Gustafson lines.

The face-off occurs and Crowe grabs the puck and skates it up ice. He passes to Slegr and sets up in front of the net. The Storms set up as well. Slegr to Ondruska, to Blake - fake pass and SLAPSHOT! Crowe DEFLECTS the shot with his stick and tips it into the goal. Score!

Before the other players can skate over to congratulate him, the Denver goalie uses his stick to viciously SLASH Crowe in the leg. Crowe goes DOWN and Quick River is furious. The Storms goalie leaves his crease and begins skating down the ice.

SLOW MOTION FROM FRONT

Quick River begins tearing off his equipment. He tosses his stick aside, pulls off his gloves, mask, and shoulder padding and continues to skate toward the other goal.

Patton sees his goalie going down ice and his eyes grow wide.

The Denver goalie is looking down at Crowe and then looks up to see Quick River's 6'7" frame lumbering in his direction.

Three Dragons players try to stop Quick River. The goalie punches the first one in the face, shattering his face shield. He picks up and tosses the second like a rag doll. He bats the third aside with his powerful forearm. Then, four Storms players and three referees grapple with Quick River and are finally able to wrestle him to the ice.

Quick River's eyes are enraged and his roars can be heard in slowed audio. Crowe watches this from the ice as he still holds his leg in severe pain.

RESUME

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
That cheap shot on Crowe was certainly what started all this. Crowe is a good friend of Quick River's.

(MORE)

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I don't think that was Crowley's better choice of actions here in this period. Especially considering the sheer size of the Storms' goalie.

SECOND COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

(laughing)

And it only took seven men to take him down to the ice.

The other commentator joins in the laughter as the scoreboard is shown. The Dragons are winning the game 4-3. The Dragons celebrate another goal.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

Well, it certainly seems that this series will indeed be going to a seventh and deciding game as the Dragons score two more on the power play following Quick River's ejection from the game. Crowley's penalty was served, but it was not enough to even the score. With Crowe out for the rest of the game with the slashing injury, it looks pretty grim for the Storms.

The final horn SOUNDS.

SECOND COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

There's the horn. We are going back to New York for game seven!

INT. TRAINER'S ROOM - DAY

Crowe's leg is being worked on by the trainer. Beaumont walks quietly into the room.

BEAUMONT

How's the leg, Sebastian?

CROWE

Fine.

BEAUMONT

Are you ready for game seven?

Crowe grunts in pain as the trainer massages his leg.

CROWE

I'm always ready!

BEAUMONT
Make me proud, Sebastian.

Crowe winces in pain and looks at Beaumont with mixed emotions.

INT. ESSEX ARENA (LOCKER ROOM) - NIGHT

Patton is sitting on a bench with all the players gathered around him on their own benches.

PATTON
I was driving home yesterday,
thinking about all that you boys
have achieved. There have highs,
lows...and a couple more lows than
I'd like to admit...

The players and Dehr laugh softly.

PATTON (CONT'D)
And there have been the exceptional
moments that have permanently
carved out a place in the history
books. When we think about all the
unbelievable moments in hockey
past, we always seem to think that
these were the only moments worth
remembering. But, boys, you are
living those moments now.

The players are seen with serious gazes.

PATTON (CONT'D)
A team like the Hellcats...they've
been here quite a few times in the
past ten years. The same can be
said for a lot - most - of the
other teams But we Storms...the
outcasts of the CHL...we've not
been here in a very long time.
I've never been here. In fact,
only two of us have been in this
position before. Karl?

Dehr steps forward sheepishly and folds his arms across his chest as the players applaud.

DEHR
I was here in nineteen seventy-
eight when the Storms won their
last Wellington Cup.

(MORE)

DEHR (CONT'D)

The last of six that they had brought here in consecutive seasons. And I do literally mean...

(pointing to floor)

...here. I stood right over there...right where Bill is standing. In fact, I was the assistant goalie coach in that year when Dominik Foley, head coach of the Storms, gave his pre-game speech to the players. I learned a lot from him and from the players.

Crowe is starry-eyed. Gustafson is smiling slightly.

DEHR (CONT'D)

But, you know what? I've also learned a lot from Coach Patton. Now, he's too humble to accept the compliment, but Dale has absolutely been the glue that's held this team together since day one. I don't give a crap if he worked for the CHL or the RIHA. A man with his patience and raw intuition deserves all the credit for what we've achieved so far.

The players applaud and cheer their "Here, here's." Patton is quiet and staring at the floor.

DEHR (CONT'D)

That being said, I think this team is *the* most talented bunch that I've ever had the pleasure of coaching. I consider myself very lucky. I couldn't have asked for a better season. Thank you, guys. You have made this the wildest trip of my life and I'm happy to be a part of it.

Dehr steps back to lean against the wall and Patton looks up again with a smile.

PATTON

The thanks goes to you, Karl.

Patton regards his assistant.

PATTON (CONT'D)

You all may be wondering who this other person is.

(MORE)

PATTON (CONT'D)

Well, that would be your esteemed leader, Captain Bruce Webster.

The players give loud APPLAUSE. Webster remains seated and shakes his head with a shy smile.

WEBSTER

I'm just gonna cut right to the chase, gentlemen...and I use that term very lightly.

The players laugh as some begin to stand up in order to see him speaking.

WEBSTER (CONT'D)

I was a shitty captain last year, and the year before and the year before that. I'm surprised that management let me keep this "C" on my chest for so long

The players are silent.

WEBSTER (CONT'D)

But this season, I've felt differently about the game. I've seen all kinds of rookies coming into the game. I've seen the spirit rise up to levels I haven't seen in ages. And it changed me. I almost feel like I'm in the League for the first time...when agents and contracts didn't mean shit. I go home at night now and go to sleep thinking that I'll be waking up and this was all just a fantastic dream. Seriously.

Patton smiles in the direction of the players because he feels the same way.

WEBSTER (CONT'D)

I know that we're a team of winners. I can't even entertain the thought of "if we lose," because I don't believe we *will* lose. I think the Dragons must concede to the better, stronger, faster team. They must bow before us...and if they don't...we will punish them.

The players begin to murmur with satisfaction.

WEBSTER (CONT'D)
 (loudly)
 We will destroy their offense...

PLAYERS
 (more loudly)
 Yeah!

WEBSTER
 (louder)
 Tear down their defense...

PLAYERS
 (shouting)
 Yeah!

WEBSTER
 (bellowing)
 And we will be...victorious!

PLAYERS
 (yelling)
 Yeah!

WEBSTER
 (quietly)
 Boys...we're gonna be so hot
 tonight, we're gonna melt down this
 entire fucking Arena.
 (shouting)
 Let's go out there and claim...
 our...Cup!

There are tremendous war cries as the team stands and rejoices.

INT. ESSEX ARENA (ICE) - NIGHT

Team theme, The Turtles song "Buzzsaw" BEGINS on the loudspeaker as the players are introduced over the system. As the players are announced, they skate out onto the ice and line up, facing one another; two warrior teams about to do battle.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
 Number nine...your captain...Bruce
 ...WEBSTER!

The CROWD GOES CRAZY as Webster skates out.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
 Left winger...number forty-two...
 Mikael...GUSTAFSON!

More APPLAUSE breaks out as Gus takes his place in line.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
Left winger...number zero-
zero...the Sniper from Staten
Island...

The song says, "buzzsaw!" and the crowd begins to ROAR before the announcer can even say the name.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
Sebastian...CROWWWWWWE!

Crowe skates out as a frenzy ERUPTS in the crowd and the music changes as the announcer starts his final introduction.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
And your goaltender for the
evening...with a League-leading
Goals Against Average of point-five-
seven...number two...Nathaniel...
QUUIIIIIIIK RIVER!

Quick River emerges from dry ice smoke and is sporting a new design on his helmet. He skates around the rink as the fans GO INSANE and then he skates along all the players and clicks fists with all of them. He loops to a halt at the end of the line to stare directly into the eyes of the Denver goalie.

The song fades suddenly and all the players begin in synchronized fashion mouthing the words that Crowe is mouthing. CLOSE on Crowe's mouth is issuing the words in a whisper.

CROWE
I am unbeatable...I am -

Quick River, Webster and Blake are repeating the same words.

QUICK RIVER
...everywhere. I am -

WEBSTER
...everthing and everything is
me...

BLAKE
...No man can stop me for I am
invincible...

Then, Gustafson in Swedish is seen, then Slegr in Czech, Ondruska in Russian, Teuffel in German, and Nicolet in French. They're all repeating the same words in different languages.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
 Oh, man, would you look at that.
 It appears that the New York
 management has finally succeeded in
 cloning Sebastian Crowe!

SECOND COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
 Well, I've gotta be a little
 intimidated right now if I'm a
 Denver player. I can say that
 much.

CUT TO:

INT. ESSEX ARENA (ICE) - NIGHT

Scenes of fast action between the two teams. A play is
 WHISTLED and Crowe's line jumps on the ice for the face-off.
 Czerkovski jumps onto the ice as well.

They face each other on the ice waiting for the puck drop.
 Their heads are close together.

CZERKOVSKI
 You forgot your pool stick.

CROWE
 We're playing hockey, ass-wipe!

The puck DROPS and Slegr takes possession as Czerkovski
 SHOULDERS Crowe in the head and suddenly abandons his
 position, racing instead to a tremendous run at Slegr.

The right winger just barely gets the pass off to Ondruska
 when he is completely LEVELED by Czerkovski.

SECOND COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
 Ooooooh, what a hit! He was just
 drilled by the big Russian!

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
 Man, Czerkovski just put a
 punishing check on Slegr. He went
 down in a heap. Play has been
 suspended as the team trainers are
 coming out onto the ice to check on
 him.

The Storms bench is shown with concern as the players are all
 standing and looking on. Czerkovski swigs water by his bench
 as he stands on the ice, looking completely removed.

After a few tense moments, Slegr rises unsteadily to his feet and the crowd applauds as he is helped slowly off the ice.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
It looks like Slegr will be going
downstairs to be examined. Let's
hope he'll be all right.

Play resumes and Gustafson's fourth line takes the ice. Gustafson passes to Moore who then passes to BRAD HEARST. The right winger passes to Mrosek who gets it to OLEG KRON and moves it up to the zone. Gustafson ONE-TIMES a pass and scores!

PANDEMONIUM lets loose in the home crowd! Gustafson is congratulated by the others as he pumps his stick high.

INT. ESSEX ARENA (DRAGONS BENCH) - NIGHT

Webster skates slowly past the Dragons bench, staring down Czerkovski.

WEBSTER
Why don't you come out and play,
Dimitri?

Czerkovski flips him off and Webster chuckles.

INT. ESSEX ARENA (ICE) - NIGHT

Crowe's line gains the ice. As soon as they do, the DRAGONS COACH is seen to tap Czerkovski on the shoulder and the Russian obediently climbs the wall onto the ice.

Czerkovski skates forward for the face-off and parks himself opposite Crowe.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
You know, you have to wonder if
Coach LeGuerin is putting
Czerkovski out there for the simple
job of distracting Crowe...to knock
him off his game.

Czerkovski is seen on various plays getting away with holding, slashing, cross-checking and high-sticking Crowe. The rookie is getting absolutely zero skating or scoring room because of all this interference and smothering play that the referees seem unable to catch in progress.

SECOND COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

Well, Slegr has been replaced on the right wing by Frederick Docerik, but the chemistry is just not there. He just seems a step too slow behind the much quicker Crowe and Ondruska.

INT. ESSEX ARENA (STORMS BENCH) - NIGHT

Crowe SLUMPS onto the bench next to Gustafson. He tiredly looks up at the scoreboard, which shows the Storms up 1-0.

CROWE

(dismally)

It's not enough.

Gustafson simply gazes up at the scoreboard and nods in agreement.

The horn SOUNDS for the end of the second period.

INT. ESSEX ARENA (COMMENTATORS BOX) - NIGHT

The commentators are sitting next to each other.

FIRST COMMENTATOR

The second period has ended and the Storms are still clinging to a one-nothing lead. The Dragons put on a terrific amount of pressure in the waning moments of the period and there were visible cracks in the New York armor.

SECOND COMMENTATOR

But Quick River continues to hold onto his most important shutout of the post season.

FIRST COMMENTATOR

Czerkovski was the positive factor in this game for Denver, keeping the high-scoring Crowe to exactly one shot on goal and more importantly, keeping him off the scoreboard.

SECOND COMMENTATOR

Something that has not happened very often.

INT. PATTON HOME (LIVING ROOM) - NIGHT

Virginia is looking nervous as she pets the big dog at her feet and listens to the television commentators talk about the second period.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
 (through television)
 So, perhaps the strategy of Coach
 LeGuerin will inevitably pay off as
 the Dragons may finally have solved
 the riddle of Staten Island.

INT. ESSEX ARENA (LOCKER ROOM) - NIGHT

Quick River and Crowe are changing after a shower. The goalie is drying off his back with a towel.

QUICK RIVER
 How are you feeling?

CROWE
 Between you and me, I wish we had
 Slegr back.

Quick River nods in understanding.

CROWE (CONT'D)
 Not to mention that Jerk-offski
 follows me around like my Siamese
 twin.

QUICK RIVER
 Then hit him.

Crowe hesitates and looks puzzled, almost as if he's never considered hitting the Russian.

QUICK RIVER (CONT'D)
 Hit him...hard. He'll back off.

CROWE
 Hit him?

QUICK RIVER
 Yeah. Novel idea in hockey. It's
 called a check.
 (a beat as he lightly
 punches Crowe in the arm)
 You should try it sometime.

CROWE
Sure. Coming from a guy who's
eight-foot-eight!

Quick River pauses and then laughs loudly and deeply.

INT. ESSEX ARENA (ICE) - NIGHT

Teuffel's body HITS the ice hard.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
Well, the second line continues to
dwindle as Czerkovski takes out the
German defenseman, Rudi Teuffel.

Teuffel is carried off the ice on a stretcher and in a neck
brace.

The second line leaves the ice sullenly.

INT. ESSEX ARENA (STORMS BENCH) - NIGHT

Dehr exits the bench to follow Teuffel and the medical team
carrying him.

INT. ESSEX ARENA (ICE) - NIGHT

The third line has a bad giveaway. The Dragons convert and
score. Denver celebrates.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
The Arena is a tomb right now as
the Dragons have tied the score up
here in the third.

The fans are shown with forlorn and worried looks on their
faces.

INT. ESSEX ARENA (STORMS BENCH) - NIGHT

Crowe bows his head in despair, shaking it disappointedly.

INT. ESSEX ARENA (ICE) - NIGHT

Webster's line takes the ice and muscles for possession of
the puck. They work hard, gain the puck, throw it on net,
regain it, SHOOT it again. The Denver goalie GLOVES it this
time. The crowd ROARS its appreciation for the effort of the
top line.

SECOND COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
 Well, Webster showing why he is the
 captain of this team, applying
 pressure on the Dragon's defense.
 The crowd certainly loving that
 last display.

Webster skates toward the bench with his line.

INT. ESSEX ARENA (STORMS BENCH) - NIGHT

Webster points in Crowe's face with a gloved hand.

WEBSTER
 Let's finish this now, hotdog!
 Somebody's making the highlights
 tonight and it better not be
 Czerkovski!

Crowe stands and climbs over the boards.

INT. ESSEX ARENA (ICE) - NIGHT

Crowe's line gains possession of the puck. Czerkovski immediately makes a run at Crowe. The rookie hears his teammates and looks up at the last minute, deftly side-stepping Czerkovski's massive CHECK attempt. The glass SHATTERS on the boards as his shoulder busts the shield. The whistle BLOWS to stop play.

INT. ESSEX ARENA - NIGHT

An OVERHEAD PAN of the Arena takes place and the scoreboard is shown as the waning time in the game is focused on. Banners are being waved by fans.

SECOND COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
 The Arena is surely a fitting name
 for the final game of this series,
 since these truly are gladiators.
 And a mighty battle it has been,
 indeed.

INT. ESSEX ARENA (ICE) - NIGHT

Fast play resumes. Derek Hand, the replacement for Teuffel, is stripped of the puck and Czerkovski receives the pass. Crowe sees him and focuses on the Russian. Suddenly, from across the ice, Crowe does something that he has never done. He abandons his position!

Crowe begins pumping his legs, skating toward Czerkovski. Faster and faster. The scene switches back and forth between them as Czerkovski's teammates notice Crowe and begin to shout at him in warning.

Czerkovski looks up at the last minute, but is too late to get away as Crowe KNOCKS him into oblivion. Czerkovski's helmet is seen SKITTERING across the ice.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
That was clean! That was clean!
And perhaps the first and only
check by Crowe on the season! What
a spectacular hit by the rookie
superstar!

The fans are GOING INSANE. Crowe skates around Czerkovski, looking down at him ominously as Crowe (from the Russian's POV) becomes hazy and out of focus.

The referees make way for the DOCTOR and TRAINER as Crowe skates away, looking at Quick River. The goalie lifts his mask, squirts himself with the water bottle, then winks and nods in Crowe's direction.

Crowe grins broadly.

INT. ESSEX ARENA (STORMS BENCH) - NIGHT

Patton's reaction is obvious as he turns to Dehr and makes a comment. Dehr begins nodding and laughing.

INT. ESSEX ARENA (ICE) - NIGHT

Crowe approaches the bench as Webster ruffles his hair with a gloved hand.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)
Is there anything that this young
man can't do?

INT. ESSEX ARENA (HALLWAY) - NIGHT

Czerkovski is being led, a trainer on one side and a doctor on the other, down the corridor. The DULL RUMBLE of the crowd is heard overhead.

CZERKOVSKI
(mumbling in Russian and
subtitled)
Did we win?

The trainer and doctor exchange annoyed looks.

INT. ESSEX ARENA (ICE) - NIGHT

DROP of the puck. Crowe scores, Gus scores, Webster scores, Ondruska scores.

FIRST COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

It is now inevitable. The Storms are just moments away from reclaiming the Wellington Cup after twenty-nine years!

SECOND COMMENTATOR (V.O.)

And a well-deserved victory it is!

The scoreboard is shown with a 6-1 score and the final horn SOUNDS. The Storms players all skate onto the ice and they begin piling on top of Quick River.

Patton and Dehr climb onto the ice as well and are surrounded by the players as Webster pulls a Storms jersey over Patton's head. Patton's name is on the back and off his expression of joy, we:

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ESSEX ARENA (ICE) - NIGHT

The team getting together on the ice for the team photo, the Wellington Cup in the center, being held by Quick River, Webster, Crowe and Patton.

A camera flash goes off and the scene dissolves to all white light.

INT. CROWE'S CAR - DAY

A sleek sports car is racing down a highway with Crowe at the wheel. Quick River is in the front passenger seat and Gus is in the rear seat, the Wellington Cup on the seat next to him, seat-belted in place.

A cell phone RINGS and Crowe hits a button to put the call on speakerphone.

FALLOR (V.O.)

(through speakerphone)

Sebastian...I've got great news!

(MORE)

FALLOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Your contract extension is ready
and waiting. All we need to do is
have you come in and -

CROWE
Can't we talk about this when I get
back?

FALLOR
Well, don't you think this is
important?

Quick River and Crowe exchange comical glances.

CROWE
Hey, Mr. Fallor...this is my one
day with the Cup. Can't this wait
'til I get back into town.

FALLOR
Back into town? Where the hell are
you?

CROWE
Look, I don't wanna talk business
right now. Just wait 'til I get
back, okay?

FALLOR
Sebastian -

Crowe hangs up the phone, Quick River and Crowe begin
laughing.

GUSTAFSON
Why do I have to be cramped up in
this little car with you two clowns
on your one day with the Cup?

CROWE
We have a surprise for you, Gus.
C'mon, man...you're gonna love
this!

GUSTAFSON
Don't think that on *my* one day with
the Cup that I'm going to be
spending it with you two.

Quick River and Crowe laugh.

CROWE
Trust me, Gus. You're gonna love
this!

INT. CZERKOVSKI HOME - DAY

A doorbell RINGS. Czerkovski, seen from behind, goes to the front door and opens it. The Wellington Cup, gleaming in the sunlight, is there in front of him, held by someone from behind.

CROWE
 (in a comically high-
 pitched voice)
 Hi...you might not recognize me,
 but I'm Mr. Wellington Cup.

The trophy is moved to the side to reveal Crowe's face.

CROWE (CONT'D)
 (sing-songy)
 Lo-ser.

Czerkovski's face turns beet red and his eyes fill with fire as Crowe takes off with the Cup toward the waiting car. As he runs toward the auto, Czerkovski takes pursuit. The three are laughing hysterically as Czerkovski begins spluttering wildly in Russian.

The car PEELS OUT and Quick River holds the Cup out the window, waving it and yelling.

CROWE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Later, Jerk-offski!

They continue to laugh riotously as the car drives off down the highway.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

AERIAL VIEW of the car driving along the road fills the screen.

GUSTAFSON (O.S.)
 How many miles is Denver from New
 York?

QUICK RIVER (O.S.)
 Just a few, Gus.

THE END